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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

8th plenary meeting
Monday, 21 September 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ulmanis (*spoke in Latvian; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election and to wish him success in discharging his duties. I wish us all a constructive fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

In 1995, the United Nations system commemorated its golden anniversary. This year, the United Nations celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a major accomplishment for humankind. The Declaration has inspired the development of a reliable and effective international system for the protection of human rights.

At the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, Latvia was under Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union did not respect human rights, even though it participated in the preparation and adoption of the Declaration. I will mention one example among many violations of human rights: three and a half months after the adoption of the Declaration, the people of Latvia, including myself, experienced the largest of several deportations. Tens of thousands of people, even elderly people and children, were deported to the gulag. This left a lasting mark on the collective consciousness of the people of Latvia and significantly altered the demographic situation.

During the period of occupation, the people of Latvia were unable to utilize fully the human-rights protection system of the United Nations. That situation changed as Latvia restored its independence. In the seven years since Latvia became a Member of the United Nations, it has benefitted from the moral and political support of the largest international organization.

Immediately after the restoration of independence, our nation had to achieve the removal of a foreign military force. This process was helped by two General Assembly resolutions and the good offices of the Secretary-General. I am pleased to announce that less than a month ago the last military installation of the Russian Federation in Latvia — the early-warning radar station in Skrunda — was closed. This event illustrates that international institutions can constructively assist in the fulfilment of bilateral agreements. Cooperation

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between Latvia and the United Nations has been rich in accomplishments. The experience gained in the United Nations community has helped us in our democratic development.

At present, Latvia is paying particular attention to economic and social development. Latvia is experiencing healthy economic growth at present. Latvia has one of the highest rates of growth in gross national product and one of the lowest rates of inflation among European Union candidate States. It has a balanced budget, and expects to have one next year also. This creates justifiable optimism that the process of accession to the European Union will continue successfully.

The development of an integrated society is a national priority. This is a complicated task because the Soviet regime intentionally created a situation in which Latvians almost became a minority in their own country. Nevertheless, Latvia is dealing resolutely with this task. By the end of the year the Government will have completed the elaboration of a programme for the integration of society. This programme will stimulate the development of a civil society and provide more opportunities for the learning of the Latvian language. When implemented, the programme will permit all residents of Latvia to participate to an even greater extent than at present in public and civic life. Already Latvia ensures broad opportunities for the development of the culture of various ethnic groups and for education in their mother tongues.

This past June, Latvia's parliament adopted a far-reaching decision about changes in the citizenship law. Most of the major political forces support these changes in the citizenship law. Shortly, the people of Latvia will voice their opinion of these changes in a referendum.

Cooperation with United Nations institutions, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has enhanced the social and economic welfare of Latvia's inhabitants. The UNDP has helped our country resolve sensitive and important issues of integration. On behalf of the Government of Latvia, I would like to express gratitude for the assistance provided by the UNDP in enhancing the welfare of Latvia's inhabitants. The successful cooperation should continue.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights spurs a consideration of Latvia's possible contributions to the human-rights protection system. As a first-time member of the Commission on Human Rights beginning next year, Latvia will support the promotion of human rights as a priority of the United Nations, and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights as the primary institution for that task. Latvia believes that the priority role of human rights requires increased funding. Latvia has decided to continue to support financially the project for the development of national human rights institutions.

On the country level, I may note the National Human Rights Office which has operated actively in our country for several years and which is the first institution of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe. The Office was established with the support of the United Nations. Latvia desires to continue this constructive cooperation with the United Nations. In support of the reform package proposed by the Secretary-General, the Government of Latvia will establish "United Nations House". By the end of the year a building in Riga will be the home of five institutions of the United Nations system.

It is significant that during the golden anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations diplomatic conference in Rome adopted a decision to establish an international criminal court. Latvia supports the establishment of an effective court and hopes that an overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States will do likewise.

The best protection for human rights is a world in which peace and security prevail. The bipolar order, with its characteristic threats to peace and security, is gone. However, the world is still unsafe. International terrorism and crime are growing, access to weapons of mass destruction is growing, ethnic conflicts exist, and threats to the ecology of our planet are mounting.

In order to solve these problems, the enhanced participation of the United Nations, including the Security Council, is essential. To fulfil its role effectively, the Security Council must reflect the real balance of the world's economic and social power and use skilfully the resources available to it. Latvia reiterates its continued support for an expansion of the Council that would result in the equitable representation of small States and all regional groups.

As I speak from this rostrum, I appreciate the rare opportunity to address the shapers of world political opinion. We, the leaders of the United Nations Member States, must realize clearly that the highest mission of the United Nations is service to humankind. The United

Nations should become a universal Organization. It will retain credibility in the eyes of the world only if the results of its efforts are clearly evident.

A prerequisite for this credibility is the ability to condemn and deter those who have violated internationally accepted norms of behaviour. The United Nations has shown the ability to do this on many occasions. I believe the time has come for world society to evaluate one of the most inhumane regimes of this century — Soviet totalitarianism. I take this opportunity to call upon victimized peoples to commence a joint effort to evaluate its legacy. The people of Latvia have endured the horrors of Soviet and Nazi occupations and therefore have the right to appeal to world society to do everything in its ability to avert the future appearance of similar scourges.

The President took the Chair.

We live in an era when the human mind has created much that is useful for promoting mutual respect and understanding in our everyday lives. I hope that the results of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly will be a lasting investment in shaping the United Nations for the next millennium.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Seyed Khatami (*spoke in Persian; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): The light of human existence is kindled by man's longing for salvation. The essence of the message of divine prophets and the content of the teachings of prominent sages have been primarily aimed at human salvation. It is painful to observe in the arena of human history the deprivation and abject misery of human beings; the deprivation of women, men and children enslaved by the whims of the ruling powers; and the ill fate of rulers deprived of compassion and sympathy for their own nations. Hence, virtuous rule and good governance have been evanescent in human history.

Ironically, much too often will and freedom of thought have been frustrated and liberty suffocated in the name of salvation, and much too often salvation has been portrayed as disposing of any and all restraints on insatiable human desires. Reason and love have thus been sacrificed at the altar of the whim. At times, liberty has been trampled in the name of justice, and at other times justice has been obliterated in the name of freedom. The result has been humanity's age-old deprivation from both justice in liberty and liberty in justice.

It is only a few centuries since genuine knowledge began to be construed as the source of power rather than an agent of its control. Ever since, knowledge, instead of serving human salvation and exalting human character, has been used as an instrument in the hands of those whose only object is to advance their own narrow, utilitarian self-interest.

Despite its magnificent progress, humanity has suffered massively over these centuries from discrimination and anguish. Survivors are still among us who can testify to the incalculable destruction caused by the two world wars, and despite the birth of the United Nations — a positive achievement for mankind — true peace based on justice still remains a scarcity.

Particularly desperate is the situation of the countries in the underdeveloped world, where so many still suffer from famine, illiteracy and disease, and some remain at the mercy of rulers who do not even take the trouble of pretending to respect democratic standards or enjoy popular support. So often they attempt to replace the absence of popular support by dependence on power whose sole purpose is the pursuit of domination and self-interest.

Oppressive and dependent governments deny their people the opportunity to experience democracy by perpetuating intimidation and terror in society, and they promote a culture of violence which inadvertently leads their opponents to resort to the same. The powers that breed and nurture such regimes can therefore not escape blame. Primarily responsible here are those powers whose intelligence services take pride in their dark record of overthrowing popular governments and supporting unpopular ones.

This image of our world is indeed grim and repulsive. Until the day that the wise and the learned wrest the reins of power from the unwise and the capricious, this image cannot at all be transformed.

Nonetheless, in my opinion, beyond the darkness and doom, genuine beauty can still be discerned in the deeper layers of history. I can assert with certitude that, on the whole, human life has blossomed spiritually and materially. Anti-colonial struggles and independence movements of many nations in this century exemplify this blossoming and progress. The collapse of the bipolar world order in the final decade of this century and the swift march of the world towards diversity, coupled with renewed assertion of identity in the international arena by nations demanding equality, are other significant achievements in this direction.

The fantasy of a unipolar world ruled by a single super-Power is but an illusion, indicating the failure of its holders to keep pace with history. I am confident that powerful nations, such as the American people, will not accept that their good name, potential and national prestige be exploited for the advancement of the dream of a unipolar world by the politicians, motivated by the short-sighted material and factional interests of a few. The evolution of public opinion in the West in support of peaceful relations on the basis of mutual respect testifies to this assertion.

Now allow me to speak here as a man from the East, the origin of brilliant civilizations and the birthplace of divine prophets — Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, peace be upon them all. I come from the noble land of Iran, representing a great and renowned nation famed for its ancient civilization, as well as for its distinguished contribution to the founding and expansion of the Islamic civilization, a nation that has survived the strong winds of despotism, reaction and submission, relying on its cultural and human wealth. It is a nation which pioneered in the East the establishment of civil society and constitutional government in the course of its contemporary history, even though, as a result of foreign interference and domestic deficiencies, at times it may have faltered in its course; a nation which has been at the forefront of the struggle for independence and against colonialism, although its national movement was subverted by a foreign-orchestrated coup. And it is a nation which carries the torch of its popular revolution, not won by force of arms or a coup, but by dethroning a regime of *coup d'état* through the power of the enlightened word. In the course of its new experience, our nation has endured eight years of an imposed war, pressure, sanctions and various unfair accusations. It has also fallen victim to terrorism, the ominous phenomenon of the twentieth century.

Today, the Iranian nation draws on its past to contemplate a better future, while defying reactionary tendencies and, backed by principles and ideals rooted in its religious, national, historical and revolutionary heritage and benefiting from positive achievements of contemporary civilization, marches, be it through trial and error, towards a promising tomorrow.

The Islamic revolution of the Iranian people was a revolt of reason against coercion and suppression. Certainly, a revolution which resorted to logic in the phase of destruction is much better disposed to resort to dialogue and reason in the phase of construction. Hence, it calls for a dialogue among civilizations and cultures instead of a clash between them.

From this rostrum and the pulpit of the United Nations, I announce that humanity, despite all calamities and hardships, is heading towards emancipation and liberty. This is the unalterable divine providence and human destiny. The malice and depravity of no individual can ever violate divine providence and the course of history.

The word "history" predates "philosophy", and man is the pillar of history. History itself is the reflection of the light of being upon various facets and dimensions of human existence. Thus, it is a unique and universal entity, albeit diverse in nature. Whenever this unique entity takes on a new guise, a new era is ushered in. Our assessment of history indeed emanates from our perception of humanity — its pivot and pillar.

Human beings, who, in the Persian poet Saadi's eloquent description borrowed from a saying of the holy Prophet of Islam, are various organs of the same body,

are outside the reach of biology or psychology. Understanding human beings requires a philosophical and reflective view of man and history. God created man with His own hand and in His own image, and He breathed into him of His own spirit, and thus humanity is but a single entity, and so is its history. The hand of God granted humankind history, will and freedom of choice; the image of God provided him culture, spirituality and liberty; and the spirit of God bestowed upon him life and vitality. Thus, human beings have come to possess history, culture and liberty.

Not only do all human beings originate from one and the same origin and share a continuous and integrated history, but also one may further postulate a single final purpose. This purpose of history is none other than spiritual culture, and genuine human liberty is its absolute prerequisite.

Whether or not one subscribes to the view that man is doomed to whirl in iterative historical cycles or to grapple with historical moments or epochs, and whether or not one holds history to be self-driven, driven by human urges, by modes of production or by superhuman heroes, everyone can agree that it is only the ever-inspiring fountain of faith that breaks every old and new shackle from humanity and arrests the iterative eternal cycle, eventually emancipating humankind from the bounds of historical determinism, just as it is only the vivifying breeze of liberty that can offer faith and spirituality to humanity.

It is thus that humankind could, in consonance with the mystic Persian poet Hafez, serenade that

> "I will subvert this high inverted vault if it should ere rotate 'gainst my dictate."

Or, in the words of the Gospel according to Saint Mark,

> if one had faith in God one could say to the mountain
>
> "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea" (*The Holy Bible, Mark 11:23*)

Through such an understanding of freedom, the tenets of human dignity can be upheld in the face of political domination and virtue, and hope against baneful blasts of despair and nihilism. Here, one can discern the trajectory of history towards liberty.

The history of humankind is the history of liberty. Only that interpretation which describes history as the arena for manifestation of liberty can provide an opening of the past for the benefit of mankind. Regardless of all philosophical systems that have attempted to attribute meanings, directions and laws of evolution to history, we can realize that because human history is intertwined with the history of liberty, when human beings are liberated from imposed constraints of exploitation and social enslavement, as well as from unrefined animal instincts such as violence and savagery, they will then side with truth and justice in line with their human nature. Thence, human history shall become the glorious history of truth and realization of justice. And this could be another expression of the famous religious doctrine of Messianism.

Whether we embark on an empirical and inductive study of history or an intuitive one, most thinkers would agree that the essence of humanity has flourished and that more veils of ignorance have been removed from the minds of human beings.

I have deliberately used the word "flourished" instead of the more common terms, such as "historical progress", in order to emphasize that, whatever school of philosophy of history we may follow, we can still share an understanding of this general and universal conception of history.

The establishment and continued functioning of the United Nations is a testament to the progressive path of the world and of human history. Today it does not require much argument to establish that instead of war and bloodshed one could and indeed ought to resort to discourse and dialogue. That fact has not been achieved easily, as if the bloodstained history of humanity forms an antecedent to this seemingly simple proposition.

Yet so long as imprudent potentates can obliterate flowers and trees, hope and mirth from the face of the Earth with a quick stroke of their folly and cruelty, it is premature to celebrate the ultimate triumph of the Logos over the sword.

The twentieth century did not only witness the manifestations of violence and human sufferings at the hands of old colonialists and the unprecedented injustice of their modern heirs; it was also the century of the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes. Let us hope that in the coming century resort to force and violence shall not be glorified and that the essence of political power shall be compassion and justice, externally manifested in dialogue between civilizations.

The question is how the United Nations may take the necessary measures to respond to this evolving global climate, and what impact it will have on the changing course of the life of mankind longing for salvation.

I would like to propose, in the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that the United Nations, as a first step, designate the year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations", in the earnest hope that through such a dialogue the realization of universal justice and liberty may be initiated.

Among the worthiest achievements of this century is the acceptance of the necessity and significance of dialogue and the rejection of force, the promotion of understanding in the cultural, economic and political fields, and the strengthening of the foundations of liberty, justice and human rights. The establishment and enhancement of civility, whether at the national or international level, is contingent upon dialogue among societies and civilizations representing various views, inclinations and approaches. If humanity, at the threshold of the new century and millennium, devotes all its efforts to institutionalizing dialogue, replacing hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding, it will leave an invaluable legacy for the benefit of future generations.

Similarly, it is necessary that as members of the United Nations we revisit the history of the formation of this Organization, with a view to reforming and improving the institution through a rational exchange of views.

The United Nations took shape in a dark era of human history, when many of its current members were still experiencing the bitter and abominable conditions of colonial rule. As a consequence, the new Organization reflected the domination of the powerful few. Things have changed now, and the opportunity has presented itself to restructure this Organization, particularly its Security Council. Here I would like to refer to the wise statement of the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his inaugural address to the Eighth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Tehran, that the Islamic countries, representing one billion and several hundred million people, should acquire a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, with the same privileges as current permanent members, as long as they are enjoyed by those members.

The time has come to reject, through understanding, the discriminatory veto privilege, and in so doing take another step towards the recognition of fair and equal rights of all Member States.

Let us all join hands in solidarity against genocide, aggression and the humiliation of mankind in various corners of the world. Let us prevent the continuation of shameful tragedies which have tarnished the face of this century in Palestine, Afghanistan and Kosovo, and in many other parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Peace and security in the Middle East, imperative as they are, will only be established through the recognition of the right of all Palestinians to exercise sovereignty over their ancestral homeland. The presently occupied Al-Quds al-Sharif ought to be the house of dialogue and understanding. Resonating from the depth of history, its voice speaks intrinsically against racism and Zionism. Great monotheistic religions can live peacefully together in Al-Quds al-Sharif, but it is the very Israeli rule that has made such a coexistence impossible. Palestine is the home of all Palestinians — Muslims, Christians and Jews — and not a laboratory for the violent whims of Zionists.

In Afghanistan, there is no military solution to that country's predicament. The universal outrage at the massacre and genocide being perpetrated there — particularly the tragic killing of Iranian diplomats and a journalist, as well as at the continued captivity of the Iranian aid workers in the hands of the Taliban — calls for sober analysis and expeditious action to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

Afghanistan, the land of people of dignity and culture, has now been turned into a haven for violence, terrorism and the production of and trafficking in narcotics. The Afghan people, as other peoples in the world, have the inalienable right to determine their own destiny and the right to enjoy a broad-based Government representing all ethnic groups, communities and tendencies in that country. This is the only way to restore tranquillity in Afghanistan. This requires resolute international cooperation in order to inhibit the lucrative and deadly business of producing and smuggling narcotics, illicit trafficking in weapons and cultivation of terrorism. The United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference and all concerned States, should bring all the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table, paving the way for the tyrannized and destitute Afghan people to freely determine their own destiny and, backed by solemn global support, should bring the rogue elements into compliance with the will of

the international community. Simultaneously the Organization should plan for the mobilization of requisite international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan once the necessary political conditions are in place.

In Kosovo, the legitimate rights of the embattled people should be recognized, and the Yugoslav Government should be made to respect these rights.

Honest and sincere efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism, constitute another important priority for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Terrorism is a product of desperation and nihilism. In a world swirling in the orbit of violence and oppression, serious combat against terrorism will not advance beyond the realm of words and slogans. The eradication of terrorism must be concurrent with a global search for justice.

This assertion should in no way be interpreted as a justification for any form of terrorism. As required by our religious, moral and cultural values and norms, we unequivocally oppose all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and we shall combat it vigorously and earnestly. In our view, in order to eradicate this menace, we should engage in serious and transparent international cooperation to combat terrorism, and at the same time redouble our efforts to attain the objective of global justice.

At the threshold of the third millennium, the world also needs to be liberated from the nightmare of nuclear war and weapons of mass destruction. Recent nuclear tests in our region, which have led to further complications, make this all the more imperative. We should all realize that the idea of attaining security through the acquisition of such armaments is nothing but an illusion.

The manifestation of a resolute global determination to eliminate all existing arsenals of weapons of mass destruction within an agreed time-frame would provide a clear objective and lend credence and add dynamism to the international efforts against the production and proliferation of these deadly weapons. The establishment of zones free from weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East, constitutes an appropriate first step in alleviating tension and mistrust emanating from these weapons. We in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as victims of the use of weapons of mass destruction, are more cognizant than anyone else of their horrifying impact. We shall thus stay at the forefront of international efforts to establish and strengthen universal arrangements for their destruction.

Security, development and prosperity in the third world require the promotion of cooperation and the utilization of proven arrangements and mechanisms for confidence-building. In this regard, it is encouraging that the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference in Tehran, cognizant of this necessity, established an appropriate mechanism to foster confidence through dialogue among Islamic countries.

As a first step in this direction, I invite our neighbours in the Persian Gulf region, who have witnessed two destructive wars in the span of one decade, to establish a security and cooperation system in the area.

In short, confidence and peace cannot be attained without a sober revision of the mentality of the cold war. The advancement and promotion of a culture of peace is contingent upon the recognition of the constructive role of nations coupled with avoidance of domination, unilateralism, confrontation and exclusion.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in keeping with its fundamental beliefs and deep-rooted heritage of civilization, seeks a world blessed with peace and tranquillity based on human dignity. It has accorded the highest priority in its foreign policy to the removal of tension. In line with the principles of the Islamic revolution, Iran is determined to follow its balanced policy of expanding relations with its neighbours and other countries on the basis of respect for independence and equality of rights.

Comprehensive peace, over and above peace among human beings, also calls for peace between mankind and nature, which in turn requires that mankind bring to a halt the systematic devouring of nature and instead emphasizes the coordination of man and nature. The preservation of the environment, as the common natural heritage of mankind, constitutes a most important priority of the coming century.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize the paramount role of the family, women and youth in the making of a better tomorrow and the consolidation of the foundations of civil society throughout the globe.

The family is the unique setting for human progress and the development of the personal and social identity of individuals. Regrettably, today, especially in the industrialized countries, the foundations of home and family have been undermined, threatening the emotional, material and spiritual health of human life. A global

effort is required to confront this danger, lest the flames of this centre of warmth, affection and education be gradually dimmed by the cold and vicious winds of alluring facades, lust and material gain.

Efforts at the global level geared to the promotion and strengthening of respect for women and their rights require a critical reassessment of the traditional and inappropriate views about women. The traditional outlook, based on the erroneous notion of the superiority of men over women, does injustice to men, women and humanity as a whole. Equally nefarious is the view that disregards the differences between men and women. We should recognize that both men and women are valuable components of humanity who equally possess the potential for intellectual, social, cultural and political development, and that comprehensive and sustainable development is possible only through the active participation of both men and women in social life.

At the threshold of the new millennium, the United Nations should have faith in the new generation, to whom the next century belongs. It should thus be prepared to accept and embrace the requirements of believing in youth. Let us bring ourselves to accept that we are not custodians of youth and that the young do have the right to enjoy the social process of growth and development, a right they should exercise consciously and wilfully. With such a new perspective, and drawing upon the dynamic ability and intellectual capability of the new generation, we can together chart a much better and brighter future for the next century.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Her Excellency Mrs. Rosario Green.

Mrs. Green (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The election of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session is a source of pride for Latin America and the Caribbean. I am personally familiar with the talent, experience and diplomatic skill of Minister Opertti and I am convinced that these qualities will help to guide, motivate and strengthen our work.

My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to Hennadiy Udovenko for the outstanding work that he accomplished as President at the session that just closed.

Last July, we had the honour of welcoming our Secretary-General to Mexico. On that occasion we observed anew his firm and resolute commitment to strengthen the United Nations, adapting it to confront the challenges of the end of the century. We recognize in Kofi Annan a man with a clear vision of the future of the Organization, and we are confident that he will know how to guide it in this transition stage towards a new millennium.

Mexico is a country with a profound multilateral calling. Our desire to seek international agreement finds fertile ground for development in this forum. It is for this reason that we are convinced of the urgent need to strengthen it and to seek within it shared answers to the challenges that the new global agenda presents.

Mexico's commitment to the United Nations does not consist of words alone. A week ago, the Government of President Ernesto Zedillo reconfirmed this by sending the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families to the Mexican Senate for approval. From the very beginning of negotiations on that Convention, over which Mexico had the honour of presiding, we insisted on the importance of having legal instruments to ensure respect for and protection of the rights of migrant workers. By taking that step, Mexico is showing its unswerving commitment to the norms of international law and is making progress in consolidating itself as a State of law.

Convinced of the need to strengthen the international system that makes it possible for us to have the will and the necessary instruments to confront together the challenges of the end of the century, President Zedillo promoted the convening of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the problem of drugs. As of that meeting, principles of responsibility shared among States and of strict respect for sovereignty, territorial

integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States replaced the scenario of mutual recrimination and unilateral evaluations. We now have the bases for a global consensus regarding the policies that must be adopted by States in order to consolidate an unprecedented effort at cooperation based on this new global, integral and balanced strategy. Mexico will not regress in its efforts to implement the commitments that we adopted last June.

The international agenda today, as reflected in the agenda of the General Assembly, is very broad and complex. I would like to refer on this occasion to only three questions which I consider to be of particular relevance: disarmament, which has been a constant issue in Mexico's foreign policy; the reform of our Organization, which will help to shape the community of nations in the next century; and the international financial crisis, which greatly jeopardizes the efforts of our countries to attain full development, as well as our ability to advance towards the future.

As far as the subject of disarmament is concerned, there is no doubt that the existence of nuclear arsenals remains one of the central problems in international relations. The threat of an atomic conflagration cannot be disregarded, and we must reiterate our commitment to fashioning a world which is free of nuclear weapons. For Mexico, the objective of eliminating these instruments of mass destruction is realistic and viable. It is time to set aside arguments that, for strategic reasons, have served to conceal the efforts of those who either do not want to give up their present nuclear capacity or else want to join the group of countries that possess this destructive ability. One can contribute to nuclear disarmament only by eliminating nuclear weapons. This is why we seek to broaden and strengthen international commitments in this respect. Our political conviction is that we must achieve new agreements that remove this scourge from humankind.

Mexico condemns all nuclear testing from principle and out of conviction. We affirmed this recently in the light of the tests conducted by India and Pakistan. Far from contributing to stability and regional balance, such actions promote the proliferation of uncertainty and fear. They also contribute to a climate conducive to the nuclear arms race.

I would like on this occasion to reiterate Mexico's conviction that dialogue and negotiation are and will remain the irreplaceable means of resolving disputes. It was in that spirit that last 9 July we supported a ministerial statement that sought to define a new agenda for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We co-sponsors of that declaration introduced a draft resolution that we hope will receive the resolute support of Member States so that we can in that way demonstrate the resolve of the community of nations to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

We are also committed to a new, integral approach to the subject of disarmament and the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction or weapons with excessively cruel and inhuman effects. There has been progress recently in the Conference on Disarmament related to security guarantees and the prohibition on the production of fissionable materials destined to be used for such weapons.

We are likewise pleased at the growing support being given to the treaties on anti-personnel landmines and on chemical and bacteriological weapons. In particular, we are gratified at the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Once again we urge the countries that have not yet done so to ratify as soon as possible these conventions that seek to eliminate such weapons from the face of the Earth.

The proliferation of small arms and its link with criminal organizations and drug-trafficking constitute a significant challenge to the majority of nations. Combating this is a priority of the Government of Mexico. The Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which was the result of a Mexican initiative, is of crucial importance and should therefore be taken into account in further negotiations on transnational crime.

In the present situation, which demands that we clearly define the framework for international relations and adapt it in a timely way, the initiatives for reforming our Organization presented by the Secretary-General acquire special significance. The United Nations must reform itself if it is to remain a central force in our collective lives.

We must recognize that traditional mechanisms for harmonization and negotiation are showing clear signs of exhaustion. We must rethink these strategies in order to deal with old and new problems. The consolidation of a structure which is truly democratic, transparent and well balanced, and which is consistent with the purpose and

principles of the San Francisco Charter must be our common goal.

In this context, I wish to stress the importance of achieving a better balance between the principal organs of the United Nations. The Security Council needs to be reformed in order to strengthen its legitimacy, representativeness, effectiveness, democracy and transparency. In considering its structure, we must correct the deficiencies in its present composition. It is not a matter of size; rather, the problem is the lack of balance in its representativeness. The Security Council must reflect the plurality and diversity of the membership of the United Nations, taking into account the profound changes in political geography experienced in the last decade.

Likewise, we must avoid repeating or even broadening existing inequalities. For this reason, Mexico is against increasing the number of permanent members. Let us not fall into the fallacy of believing that the Council's effectiveness resides in the right of veto. All rights bear responsibilities and these must not be abused. Otherwise, the necessary legitimacy which makes the Security Council efficient and effective is eroded. This is why I wish to reiterate our appeal to the permanent members to join in an open-minded way in designing a system to regulate the sphere of application of that privilege.

Nonetheless, we recognize that structural reform of the Security Council will not in itself guarantee its effectiveness. Hence, we insist on the need to progress towards a thorough revision of its working methods and of the decision-making process. The community of nations has given that organ the high responsibility of ensuring international peace and security. Under paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter, the members of the Organization recognize that the Council acts in our name in carrying out these functions.

It is therefore clear that the Security Council's attitude must be profoundly democratic and one of respect towards the General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the same Article. Anything else would be a violation of the letter and spirit of the Charter, and would mean an erosion of the Council's legitimacy and its capacity to fulfil the responsibilities that we have entrusted to it. We must break this vicious circle and make serious progress in the design and implementation of the needed reforms.

My country will continue to participate actively in the Working Group charged with reform of the Security Council. We hope to be able to submit to the Assembly recommendations that can receive widespread support, genuinely reflecting the collective aspirations of all the members of the United Nations.

Our concern about international security and the capacity of our multilateral forums to respond effectively to new challenges are compounded today by the uncertainty caused by the international financial crisis.

It is obvious that the Bretton Woods system has shown its inability to respond adequately to the challenges of the current international financial crisis. We are undoubtedly faced with a situation of high risk which threatens to erode the important development attainments of our emerging economies. Given the vicissitudes of the international financial situation, we, the countries of Latin America, have endeavoured to maintain our economic strength through profound and sometimes difficult processes of structural reform. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to manage in a responsible way the economic policy mechanisms that ensure our stability and growth.

It is clear that this is not enough and that concerted action is needed on the part of all countries and international financial organs. Heads of State and Government of the Rio Group meeting in Panama on 4-5 September urged the countries in which the financial crisis originated to adopt the measures needed to correct their imbalances. They made an appeal to the countries of the Group of 7 to immediately take the necessary measures to restore stability to financial markets and to ensure the growth of the world economy. The Rio Group also appealed to international financial institutions to be involved more quickly and effectively in finding solutions to the international financial crisis.

Overcoming the present situation must be our priority. We must be creative in order to find formulas that make it possible for us to avoid recurring financial crises and banish the spectre of global recession. Just as the community of nations has recognized the wisdom of preventive action to protect international peace and security, it is now necessary to take that same course in order to prevent cracks in the fabric of the world economy.

We must consider ways of implementing an early warning system that will allow us to detect financial crises in time and thus avoid their harmful effects. In the recent past, there have been warning signs which in

isolation were not identified as a prelude to more serious problems. We must collect such experiences, learn from them and prepare ourselves better for the future.

No country is free from responsibilities, just as no country is free of the effects of international financial imbalances. It is therefore up to us together and with a clear sense of direction to seek the proper mechanisms to respond early to signs that larger problems are imminent. In this universal forum, I reiterate our conviction that we must act resolutely in the short term. We need to define an agenda for international economic stability. We appeal to the Secretary-General so that, under his leadership and guidance, we can share experiences and proposals that will help us work toward global financial security.

By attaining that goal of preventive diplomacy, we will be contributing to the development and well-being of millions of persons who are victims of the financial uncertainty that today afflicts all economies, particularly those of a relatively lower level of development, and endangers the stability of all nations.

In the face of an uncertain political and economic panorama, the role of the United Nations takes on new relevance. Recent changes on the international scene yield unprecedented opportunities but at the same time present challenges for which there are no easy answers. We must act together in order to encourage the necessary consensus as that will allow us to take advantage of the benefits of globalization and confront its challenges.

We must fortify our individual and collective capacity in order to take advantage of the positive trends towards peace, stability, development and respect for law. Likewise, we must strengthen our ability to banish confrontation, violence, terror and inequality.

The United Nations is the necessary forum for facing international problems and finding solutions to them. As we reaffirm our commitment to the purposes of the San Francisco Charter, we shall continue to promote the participation of the United Nations in the definition of the parameters of international coexistence.

Address by The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, His Excellency The Honourable William Skate, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Skate (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and the Government of Papua New Guinea, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to your important post. Your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly shows the esteem in which the international community holds both you, personally, and your country, Uruguay. The Papua New Guinea delegation is confident that you will guide this fifty-third session of the General Assembly to a successful conclusion.

May I also take this opportunity, through you, to express my delegation's sincere appreciation to your predecessor, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his outstanding stewardship in facilitating the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat staff for the care they put into the planning of the affairs of our Organization.

This is the first occasion on which I have addressed the General Assembly. The year since I was elected Prime Minister has been a year of great challenge in which my Government has been confronted with problems associated with natural disasters and those that have resulted from many years of neglect.

The realities of life in the rapidly shrinking world mean that a partnership must, in practice, be turned into something practical and viewed in a much broader global perspective as an element of a worldwide partnership in managing and, where possible, directing change.

The point is brought home by a series of natural disasters which have affected Papua New Guinea over the past year. First came the drought caused by the El Niño effect, and then followed frosts, which led to severe food shortages in many different parts of the country. Then came the tsunami which completely destroyed villages in the Aitape area of the Sandaun province on the north coast of the mainland, killing more than 2,100 people,

mainly children and women, and injuring many more. In between came floods and landslides, which caused death and destruction in several places. Meanwhile, people around Rabaul continue to cope with the effects and try to rebuild in the aftermath of the 1994 volcanic eruptions.

The drought, in particular, showed that people and States throughout the world have to be partners in dealing with the causes of disasters arising from climatic or other forms of environmental change. The prompt and generous response to the series of natural disasters by our neighbours and friends in many different countries showed that they are truly our partners in dealing with the effects of such changes.

Like other developing countries, Papua New Guinea faces the challenge of providing its people with opportunities to improve both the material standard of living and the quality of life. My Government has had to address these multiple changes while dealing with natural disasters and carrying out a comprehensive programme of structural adjustment.

In doing so, we are working hard to make sure that private initiative contributes to public welfare and national development, as it can and should, by focusing on trimming the public sector so that State resources are used where they can be most effective.

The result has been a stable economy with continuing economic growth. It has been achieved and is being maintained despite the negative impact on trade and investment prospects arising from the economic crisis affecting so many of our East Asian neighbours.

The lesson we draw from the experience is that the world is truly becoming a global community. The challenge we face is to develop a global partnership — strong, focused, and determined enough to manage and, where possible, to direct change. The lesson has obvious implications for a world in which some countries experience "aid fatigue", while increasing numbers of people elsewhere fall and remain below the poverty line, where survival itself is the most pressing issue.

I know that with its small, open economy, my country's development is directly influenced by developments in world markets for our products. Currently, my country is suffering from the economic crisis experienced by our major trading partners, in which we are forced to undertake significant reform programmes to protect our economy and our people.

In this regard, we turn our attention to international financial institutions to help us restructure our economy. Unfortunately, we have had mixed reactions from them. Some of them, including the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, have been very positive in their discussions with us, while others appear to be slow in responding. This leads me to think that sometimes some of these organizations are insensitive and do not appreciate the difficulties and hardships faced by our people without their help.

This year, despite the El Niño drought and other natural disasters that devastated my country, Papua New Guinea, we have continued to become more vigilant to these challenges and to take remedial measures. Notwithstanding the hardship our economy is experiencing because of the international economic crisis, the value of our currency has consistently been recovering. For Papua New Guinea to realize and sustain its current reform programmes, it has to secure external financial support.

The challenge is to forge a new global partnership for change — a partnership in which both developed and developing countries join together to address the issues that the global community will face in the twenty-first century. This partnership will be necessary if the shared hopes of humanity for peace, justice and a better way of life are to progress.

I see my Government's foreign policy of partnership in the Asia-Pacific as a building block for the global partnership on which the future depends. For developing countries in particular, there is really no alternative way.

In facing the challenge of improving both the material standards of living and the quality of life of our people, we are carrying out comprehensive programmes of structural adjustment and changing our focus so that both private and State resources can be directed to social welfare and national development. Despite the negative effects of the current global crisis, we are achieving a stable economy, stabilizing our currency and attracting investments.

When my Government came into office in July 1997, my priority was the resolution of the nine-year-old Bougainville conflict, which had caused terrible suffering and the loss of lives and property. Three factors — the desire of the men and especially the women of Bougainville to end the fighting, my desire for a consensus resolution and the moral and practical support

of Australia and New Zealand — led to a meeting in Burnham, New Zealand, in October 1997 where a truce was signed.

As an integral part of the truce, my Government approached our friends in the region to form an unarmed and neutral regional Truce Monitoring Group. The Government of the Solomon Islands — which played a very constructive role in the processes — New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu provided personnel to the Truce Monitoring Group, and its presence helped mutual confidence-building and made people feel safe.

The peace monitoring group that took over on 1 May this year continues to provide a positive role in maintaining and consolidating peace. In March this year, I met in Lincoln, New Zealand, with the main Bougainvillean parties involved in the conflict, and we agreed that a permanent and irrevocable ceasefire should take effect from 30 April 1998. Proceeding on a bipartisan-national basis and in close consultation with all of the major Bougainville parties, I agreed that the State would approach the Security Council to endorse the Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville. I also requested that the Council send a small observer mission to monitor and report on developments.

As the internationally recognized representatives of all of the people of Papua New Guinea and being proud of Papua New Guinea's independence and sovereignty, we made these requests with mixed feelings, but with determination made strong by our faith in the cause of peace.

I am pleased to report that the Security Council responded positively to our request, and, through the efforts of other South Pacific Forum missions in New York and others in close cooperation with the Secretary-General, the Observer Mission is now on Bougainville, operating side by side with the personnel of the peacekeeping mission.

As I speak, my Government is making arrangements for a Bougainville restoration Government to take office within the framework of our Constitution before the end of this year. At the same time, the people and leaders of Bougainville are performing the traditional ceremonies of reconciliation.

Our partners from Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Japan and the United Nations Development Programme are providing resources for restoration and development. A number of non-governmental organizations, including churches, the Red Cross and Doctors Without Frontiers are also active. My Government is taking practical steps to strengthen civil authority by training Bougainvillean policemen to work in Bougainville.

Having begun the processes of peace in Bougainville, we must now do everything we can to make peace work through peaceful means. While the peace process on Bougainville is still fragile, my Government is confident that with the support of all Papua New Guineans and of our neighbours and friends in the international community, it will continue to gain strength. As it gains strength, we expect direct international involvement to become of less importance, decreasing by agreement as mutual confidence and trust consolidates. The Bougainville peace process has shown in a practical and constructive manner how people can seek reconciliation and forgiveness.

The Security Council, together with the Secretary-General, have given both moral, and through the Observer Mission, visible and practical support.

On a separate though broadly related matter, Papua New Guinea commends the United Nations on 50 years of cooperation in international peacekeeping and reaffirms its commitment to these processes. Papua New Guinea makes a resolute commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. In doing so, we recognize that like any other institution, the United Nations has limitations. Consistent with our view of the United Nations as a means of promoting global cooperation and partnership to meet the challenges of change in the twenty-first century, Papua New Guinea continues in its strong belief that its moral values and organizations offer hope to humanity.

Consistent with our commitment to the United Nations, my Government is actively engaged in bringing our national laws, policies and practices into line with the important declarations and plans of action produced by the United Nations. We give priority to implementing United Nations declarations and plans of action to advance the rights of women and the elimination of child abuse.

In common with the other Member countries, we believe that it is timely to bring the United Nations Charter into line with contemporary reality by eliminating references to "enemy States". Papua New Guinea

strongly supports calls for a new Security Council for the new millennium.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, we endorse the Declaration issued by its thirteenth Summit, held in Durban, South Africa.

The Security Council should be reformed and expanded. An effective Security Council should be of a size and composition which matches the enhanced role that the world expects it to play in coordinating global approaches and actions directed to deal with the issues we will all face in the twenty-first century. Consistent with the mutual respect and equity on which partnership must be based, Papua New Guinea believes that all permanent members of the Security Council should have similar privileges and rights.

Changing the world from a system of relations between imperial Powers to a partnership between sovereign States through decolonization is among the United Nations greatest achievements. The process will not be completed, as it must be, until the remaining 17 dependent territories have exercised their inalienable right to self-determination. Neither small size nor remoteness should be allowed to qualify or limit their rights. The recently concluded South Pacific Forum, held in Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia, has confirmed its support for that right.

As one of the States which has always taken a close interest in the situation and in the rights of the indigenous Kanaks of New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea is pleased to note the progress made in implementing the Matignon Accords, culminating in the recent Agreement to the Noumea Accord.

The Noumea Accord will, we believe, provide a sound basis for the future fulfilment of all legitimate political aspirations. We urge all parties to honour both its letter and its spirit. The United Nations should continue to monitor developments in New Caledonia until implementation is complete and self-determination has been achieved.

More than 80 per cent of Papua New Guineans live in rural villages, where they depend directly on the land, rivers, lakes and sea for their livelihood. Our national Constitution commits us to use and develop the rich variety of the country's natural resources for the common good and the benefit of future generations. In doing so, it upholds the most up-to-date principles of international environmental law. The same provisions also provide a sound basis for domestic policy and law-making.

Papua New Guinea has spoken out strongly and worked actively on a wide range of environmental issues. Consistent with our record and ongoing commitment, my Government will shortly be signing and then ratifying the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In line with the importance we attach to such matters, Papua New Guinea is party to conventions arising out of the Rio Summit on environment and development and Agenda 21. My Government will continue to follow and support the future work of the Commission, including efforts to translate and integrate internationally agreed objectives and standards into domestic laws and programmes of action.

Like other members of the South Pacific Forum, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. We strongly urge its full implementation. Together with other States in the region, we have joined as partners with distant-water-fishing nations to develop a programme to manage the sustainable use of tuna stocks in the western and central Pacific.

The world's leading scientists have concluded that the rise in global temperatures poses serious threats, such as sea-level rise and an increase in natural catastrophes, such as the El Niño phenomenon.

Papua New Guinea, together with the small island States in the Pacific, will continue to stress the urgency for developed countries to take a strong lead in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Kyoto Protocol has paved the way for annex I countries to fulfil their commitments under the Convention on Climate Change and the Protocol itself. We urge those parties to translate their legally binding targets for the reduction of their emissions into concrete action. While it is our firm conviction that there must be a global approach, we cannot support shifting the burden to developing countries as a precondition for the ratification of the Protocol.

At the recent South Pacific Forum meeting, our Government, together with other heads of the South Pacific region, confirmed our support for the South Pacific Environmental Programme and the Forum

Fisheries Agency (FFA) as a key sector. The FFA programme will ensure the maintenance of sustainable fisheries in the region as well as enhance the economic security of coastal States, particularly those economies which are highly dependent on this one resource.

This is the International Year of the Ocean. Papua New Guinea will work actively with other South Pacific Missions in New York to commemorate this Year, with particular emphasis on the sustainable use of resources derived from the oceans.

With its recent share of national disasters, some of which have taken the ultimate human toll, Papua New Guinea is concerned about climate change, rising sea levels and the urgent need to reduce carbon and other emissions in the atmosphere. Having experienced natural disasters at first hand, I would say that the greatest challenge for the United Nations is to strengthen the global community's capacity to respond promptly and effectively to natural disasters. I am sure that my friends from China and Bangladesh, where large areas have recently been devastated by floods, would agree. Papua New Guinea strongly supports the renewal of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and preparedness and the Yokohama Strategy adopted in 1993.

Consistent with our shared commitment to a stable, peaceful and environmentally safe world, my Government supports the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We support efforts to ban transboundary movements of radioactive and other hazardous wastes in and through our region and to ensure that damage arising from nuclear explosions is adequately compensated.

Together with our partners in the South Pacific Forum, we recently reaffirmed our determination to maintain the South Pacific as a nuclear-free zone. We also expressed our support for the other regional nuclear-free zones, in Africa, South-East Asia and the Latin American and Caribbean region, and the proposed new initiative in Central and South Asia. Like people and Governments throughout the world, we in the South Pacific were seriously concerned about the series of nuclear weapons tests conducted by India and Pakistan. The best course of action would be not only to stop testing now but also to destroy all nuclear weapons. Papua New Guinea believes that the same should apply to all weapons of mass destruction in other parts of the world.

Encouraged at the positive signs of progress towards resolving conflicts and securing peace in several areas of tension and concern in Asia and Africa, Papua New Guinea nonetheless remains anxious over recent developments affecting Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia. We are heartened by the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity to restore peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. Also, we support the initiative of President Nelson Mandela of South Africa to revive a common vision for peace in Africa.

Consistent with our commitment to peaceful dialogue between nations, Papua New Guinea condemns those who employ terrorism against innocent people, including women and children. Diplomacy is the means by which States join together as partners and cooperate in bringing about changes to promote peace, development and justice for people both in principle and, even more importantly, in practice. It is therefore vital that diplomats be able to live and work safely, free from the threat of terrorism, such as that practised against American diplomats in Africa.

In this connection, following recent events on our common border with Indonesia, my Government would like to make clear its strong and consistent recognition of the sovereignty of Indonesia, including Irian Jaya, and the continuing mutual respect in all aspects of our relationship.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Papua New Guinea's commitments to the United Nations Charter; to the inalienable rights of the independent territories to self-determination, noting the Matignon and Noumea accords for the Kanak people of New Caledonia; the declaration to advance the rights of women and eliminate child abuse; to our determination to maintain global natural disaster preparedness; to work actively in commemorating the Year of the Ocean; to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming; and to the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States.

Partnership in promoting change is the key to addressing the challenges that the world will face in the twenty-first century. I believe the challenge for the Member States is to join together to change this Organization for the better so that it will serve as an effective basis for partnership, to address and resolve the issues that lie ahead.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable William Skate, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I take great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Obuchi (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I should like to extend my most sincere compliments to you, Sir, Foreign Minister of Uruguay, on your assumption of office as President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I should also like to express my respects to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Deputy of the Supreme Rada of Ukraine, for all his efforts during his tenure as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

How should we build the framework for a new international order in the twenty-first century? This is the question that our international community is facing amidst new situations that were created in the aftermath of the collapse of the cold war, almost a decade ago. That collapse provided an opportunity to establish a harmonious order based upon the cooperation of the entire international community, rather than the maintenance of peace by a military balance between two super-Powers. However, our international community today is troubled with frequent regional conflicts and challenged by the inseparably connected problem of poverty. Creating a new system to cope effectively with such challenges is the greatest agenda for our international community today. To achieve this objective, we must simultaneously promote three issues: peace and development, which are two sides of the same coin, plus United Nations reforms, which are indispensable in our efforts to achieve the first two.

Today, the possibility of a world-wide conflict has decreased in comparison to the cold-war era, but conflicts arising from such causes as ethnic and religious confrontation are increasing. In dealing with these conflicts, it is more important to focus on how to prevent them rather than on how to solve them once they break out. In this regard, we must first consider the essential issues of arms control and disarmament. The recent nuclear tests of India and Pakistan constitute enormous challenges to the non-proliferation regime. We urgently need to find a way to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, it is necessary to deal not only with the weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, but also with such conventional weapons as small arms and anti-personnel landmines.

Social instabilities lie at the root of conflicts. This makes it extremely important to deal with development issues. There are also growing global threats, such as environmental destruction and terrorism. The cruel destructive power of terrorism especially threatens the lives and safety of citizens. It is different by nature from conventional armed conflict between nations, but in the post-cold-war world it poses increasingly grave concerns to our security. Our international community should seriously consider ways to effectively cope with these problems and threats.

Today, based on such thinking, I should like to discuss these issues from the perspectives of peace and development and of reform, which is indispensable in promoting the first two. In so doing, I want to elaborate on our thinking and express our determination to play a leading role in fulfilling our responsibilities.

I should first like to talk about nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, which are essential to maintaining peace. In May this year, India and Pakistan conducted, to our deepest regret, a series of nuclear tests, which are formidable challenges to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In seeking a world free of nuclear weapons, it is indispensable that we allow no further proliferation and secure a solid basis for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The existing format certainly is not perfect, but there is no feasible, realistic alternative if we are to ensure stability in our international community. No country should be allowed to attempt to set back international efforts towards strengthening the non-proliferation regime. At the same time, to improve the effectiveness of this regime, it is

important, together with the efforts by all nations to maintain non-proliferation, to see sincere implementation of nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States. Based on this thinking, we regard the following five points as important.

First, the nuclear non-proliferation regime should become more universal. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) sets the structure for international control of nuclear weapons, with no alternative, and we strongly urge non-parties to accede to this Treaty promptly and without condition. In this context, we highly appreciate Brazil's accession to the NPT in August this year.

Secondly, in order to complement the NPT and ensure nuclear non-proliferation, I should like to underline the need to place strict export controls on equipment, materials and technologies that relate to nuclear weapons and missiles. We urge every nation to engage in serious efforts to prevent any transfer of such materials and technologies.

Thirdly, we must prevent any further nuclear testing. Without universal support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation system cannot be maintained. I should like to call on nations that have not yet done so to promptly become parties to this Treaty so as to realize its early effectuation. In the meantime, we should take necessary steps to assure the cessation of nuclear testing.

Fourthly, further advancement of nuclear disarmament by nuclear-weapon States is more important than ever in maintaining and strengthening various efforts for nuclear non-proliferation. We hope to see early effectuation of START II and an early launching of negotiations on START III. Also, we welcome such actions as the decision by the British Government in July this year for a significant reduction of their nuclear arsenals, as well as France's decision to dismantle its ground-to-ground missiles. We urge all the nuclear-weapon States to implement sincerely their obligations under article 6 of the NPT, thereby promoting nuclear disarmament even further.

Fifthly, to put a cap on nuclear-weapons capability, each nation must positively participate in and reach an early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

During this session of the General Assembly, Japan will take initiatives to promote these five objectives.

Needless to say, the promotion of arms control and disarmament should not be limited to the area of nuclear weapons. Dealing with other weapons of mass destruction, such as biological and chemical weapons, as well as delivery vehicles, such as missiles, is of high importance. The recent missile launch by North Korea, even if it was an attempt to launch a satellite into orbit, poses a serious problem which directly concerns both Japan's national security and peace and stability in North-East Asia. It also constitutes a challenge to our efforts to prevent the proliferation of delivery vehicles of weapons of mass destruction. I renew my call for North Korea to consider seriously the 15 September statement by the President of the Security Council as a message reflecting the views of the entire international community, and to never repeat such an act.

Furthermore, to prevent the outbreak and escalation of conflicts, we also need to address the problems of anti-personnel landmines and small arms, including automatic rifles, regarding which we have yet to make sufficient efforts. We intend to continue to play a leading role on these issues. In particular, in the area of anti-personnel landmines we will endeavour to strengthen international cooperation towards early realization of the "zero victim" objective, by supporting assistance for victims and the elimination of landmines. We are pleased that 40 countries have now ratified the Convention banning anti-personnel landmines and that it will enter into force on 1 March next year. We are now making efforts for Japan's earliest possible ratification of this Convention. We ask other nations yet to ratify it to do so promptly, so that it may become a universal framework to ban anti-personnel landmines totally.

Conflicts give rise to intolerable crimes against humanity, such as genocide. To deter such crimes, it is necessary to establish a permanent international court that punishes such acts as international crimes. Adoption of the agreement in July this year in Rome to establish such a court was an act of historic significance. Japan believes that the blessing and cooperation of the entire international community is indispensable if the court is to produce effective results. That is why we took important initiatives at the Diplomatic Conference. It is our hope that the International Criminal Court will continue to grow and become a universal framework.

In our efforts towards peace, with civilian staff assuming an increasing role in United Nations activities, including peacekeeping, we observe with regret an increasing number of cases where non-combatants

become the targets of violence by belligerents. In July this year, a staff member from Japan, together with staff members from Poland, Tajikistan and Uruguay, fell victim to a despicable criminal act directed at the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan. The countries concerned and the United Nations need to seriously examine ways to ensure the security of United Nations personnel and of relevant humanitarian-assistance organizations. In this regard, we reiterate our call upon nations that have not yet done so to join the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, adopted in December 1994, so that it may come into force as soon as possible. At the same time, Japan will also make contributions of about $1 million to the United Nations to support security measures for United Nations personnel. We hope many other countries will also make contributions to support United Nations efforts in this field.

Some of the basic causes of conflicts are problems of economic and social development. We must pay close attention to them. During the Tokyo International Conference on Preventive Strategy, which Japan hosted this January, participants underlined the importance of a comprehensive approach in dealing with such problems by coming to grips with various causes of them, including poverty.

The development issue is the greatest challenge the world will face in the twenty-first century. In addressing this issue, we have to deal not only with the economic-development problems of the developing countries, but also with the social sides of development, such as human rights and good governance.

Japan has been advocating a new development strategy that contains such ideas. We are pleased that the concept was endorsed in 1996 at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and has been gaining support in the United Nations. This strategy is based on the philosophy that the international community should make no distinction between donor countries and recipient countries and should tackle the problems of development as a common issue for all. In this regard, this strategy attaches great importance to developing countries' playing an active and responsible role in their own development. It also emphasizes positive cooperation based on partnership without distinction between developing and developed countries. These are the guiding principles of the new development strategy.

On the basis of these principles, the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) will be held in Japan this October as a follow-up to the first Conference, held in 1993. Its objective is to seek a path to promote the new development strategy in Africa so as to support African countries' own nation-building efforts. In this regard, we aim to draw up an agenda for action.

Japan also has been making the greatest contributions possible to the stable development of Asia. In the present financial and economic crisis we have taken initiatives to implement measures of support totalling about $43 billion to Asian countries, which is the largest single contribution by any nation in the world. Simultaneously, Japan is making every possible effort, through such measures as stabilizing our financial system, to put our own economy on a recovery track within the next year or two. We believe that the early recovery of our own economy is the best contribution we can make to the economies of Asia and of the world. We hope strongly that the coming conference, TICAD II, will benefit from such Asian experiences and provide a good opportunity to use the wisdom and power of the entire international community to assist the development of the African continent.

In the post-cold-war transformation of international relations, Japan is actively promoting what we call Eurasian diplomacy. This means redefining relations with countries of the Eurasian continent, including the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and countries in the Silk Road regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus range. This is another example of Japan's policy of promoting peace and development in tandem.

In today's world, problems that directly threaten people's daily lives across national borders are becoming increasingly serious. These include environmental destruction, overpopulation, human rights violations, the exodus of refugees, terrorism, drug-trafficking, international organized crime and global diseases such as AIDS. To cope with these problems, our international community must be united under the concept of protecting the security and dignity of mankind from global threats. Furthermore, citizens, along with Governments, must get together to engage in common undertakings, such as making common rules. In particular, as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I should like to point out that efforts against large-scale human rights violations and efforts to ease refugee

problems arising from conflicts are also indispensable for preventing conflicts.

In addressing issues of peace and development, there is an urgent need to reform the United Nations and to strengthen its functions. Peace and development are two sides of the same coin. At the same time, if the United Nations is to respond effectively to various problems that our international community shoulders, we urgently need to do our best to assure a healthy financial basis. This includes each Member State's sincere implementation of its obligation to pay its assessed contribution. Japan's assessment will be over 20 per cent, exceeding the sum of that of four permanent members of the Security Council, not including the United States. In this situation, reform in the financial area requires serious attention. In reforming the United Nations to strengthen its functioning, we must promote reforms in three interrelated areas in a balanced manner: reform in the political area, the development area, and the financial area, which supports political and development activities.

It is regrettable that even though the chances of materializing reforms increased during last year's General Assembly session, discussions on the reform of the Security Council have not developed since then. Under the circumstances facing the international community I mentioned earlier, reforming the Security Council to reinforce its legitimacy and effectiveness is an urgent task. Japan, with the endorsement of many countries, is prepared to assume greater responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. This would be in accordance with our basic philosophy of non-resort to the use of force prohibited by our Constitution. We are now in the fifth year since the concrete discussions on the reform of the Security Council started. Points of argument have been exhausted. We are now at a stage where each country should make a political decision. Japan believes that we are able to agree on a package that responds to the interests of the entire international community and to the legitimate concerns of the majority of countries. If we do not have the will to decide and act in order to achieve an agreement on such a package, we will not be able to respond effectively to challenges the international community will face in the coming century. Japan strongly urges all countries to make a bold political decision for the strengthening of the United Nations so that we may reach an agreement on the framework of the reform during the present session of the General Assembly.

The twenty-first century is just around the corner. It is our duty to preserve and develop the heritage of mankind in the coming century. The late professor, Mr. Yutaka Akino, who gave his life during his mission of peacekeeping in Tajikistan, was one of my close friends. He had the following motto: do not be pushed around by events; take action. Along the same lines, the United Nations should make action a top priority and become a strong Organization equipped with both effectiveness and credibility, squarely tackling all problems. We the Member States should make utmost efforts to achieve it, so that the United Nations can enter the twenty-first century as such an Organization. The future of the United Nations is in the hands of the Member States. My guiding principle in Japan's policy management is to be sincere, to be steady and to be courageously prompt. I therefore should like to conclude my remarks by emphasizing my resolution to take leadership in addressing issues of peace, development and reform in a sincere, steady and courageously prompt manner.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Keizo Obuchi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, His Excellency Mr. Guido di Tella.

Mr. Di Tella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Secondly, allow me to express the profound regard and warm ties that unite Argentina and Uruguay, an ongoing relationship that was already under way at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

We also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Udovenko for the courage, balance and impartiality he exhibited during the course of his mandate.

In a globalized world, peace and security, economic stability and growth are more than ever indissolubly linked. The economic and financial crisis that concerns us today should boost our commitment to the economic reform process which we are carrying out in our region. Trade and foreign investment are clearly sources of opportunity and incentives to growth and competitiveness. But it is also clear that in recent decades the free

movement of capital flows has been one of the main engines of economic development for many countries.

In order to dispel its negative effects, globalization requires educational, social and environmental policies that benefit all of society in a balanced and equitable manner. We feel it is damaging to succumb to the temptation of imposing restrictions on international trade in order to thwart the spread of economic crisis, or to resort to hampering or placing conditions on the flow of financial resources in order to moderate their volatility.

In Latin America, countries such as Argentina have made sustained and coherent efforts to consolidate their financial situation, contain the budget deficit and provide assurances to foreign investment by helping to create a solid economic environment for the region, which is increasingly being seen with new eyes.

A few days ago, the Presidents of the Rio Group, meeting in Panama, expressed their resolve to continue managing economic policy mechanisms in a responsible manner that guarantees stability and growth. Accordingly, financial institutions and those countries with the capacity to provide assistance should understand the problems that this critical economic situation presents to countries that find themselves in the eye of the storm and act accordingly.

The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is today a model of economic foundations based on freedom and democracy in which cooperation is the very essence of the system.

As an illustration of the excellent relations in the area of security and defense, Argentina pressed for the adoption of the Political Declaration of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile as a Zone of Peace, which was signed at the MERCOSUR summit held in Argentina on 24 July 1998.

The recent nuclear tests in South Asia constituted a step backwards with regard to regional and global security. These tests delay the economic development and well-being of the population. Argentina, together with countries that have renounced the military use of nuclear technology, has urged the States of that region to stop conducting tests and to adhere to the international instruments in force. Argentina, for its part, has offered to share fully its experience in peaceful nuclear cooperation. Allow me to recall that Argentina was the first country that, having mastered the nuclear fuel cycle, chose to limit its own use of this technology.

We feel proud of the steps our country has taken in the last decade related to non-proliferation issues. In the nuclear field, we ratified the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) in 1994 and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, and have become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

In the chemical and bacteriological field, we have promoted the Joint Declaration on the Complete Prohibition of Chemical and Biological Weapons — the Mendoza Agreement — of 1991, a commitment originally limited to Argentina, Brazil and Chile, which was later extended to most Latin American countries. We have also adjusted our domestic legislation strictly to control exports related to dual-use chemical, bacteriological and missile-related substances and technologies, in accordance with existing international instruments. Last July, as a follow-up to the Mendoza Agreement, we adopted the Ushuaia Declaration, which established the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) as an area free of weapons of mass destruction. Hence, Argentina has taken the decision to assume greater responsibility in this field. In turn, this decision has allowed us to continue exchanges of advanced technology.

In relation to conventional weapons, we strongly support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, to which we regularly provide information. We also support other important initiatives recently adopted within the framework of the Organization of American States (OAS), such as the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials and Other Appropriate Actions. Small arms constitute another source of international concern. It is worth mentioning that regional and international seminars have recently been held in Buenos Aires on this topic.

We are not indifferent to the grave scourge of antipersonnel mines. In 1995, Argentina established a moratorium on the export of mines and more recently, in December 1997 at Ottawa, I had the honour to sign, on my country's behalf, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

In our hemisphere we work earnestly and in a spirit of compromise to overcome all differences by means of negotiation. As we gradually resolve the few pending bilateral disputes, we will definitively consolidate our region as a zone of peace. We trust that in coming

months we shall see important developments in that regard. Friendship among peoples is the best guarantee against conflict.

We are convinced that the United Nations presence in Haiti, in keeping with the desire of the Government of that country, will help to consolidate democracy and contribute to the prosperity of the Haitian people.

The resurgence of terrorist attacks comes as a harsh reminder that no State is immune to terrorism. My country firmly supports the initiatives under way to supplement with new conventions the network of anti-terrorism norms now in force, leading to enhanced international cooperation and to establishing the obligation of all States to bring to justice and punish those responsible for these acts. The Argentine Government continues to make every effort to clarify the acts of terrorism committed against the Israeli embassy and the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association in Buenos Aires.

Let me highlight the fact that on 2 September 1998 the Argentine Republic signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. Likewise, next November Argentina will host the second specialized inter-American conference on terrorism.

Severe global humanitarian crises, usually accompanied by forced displacement of populations, constitute another issue that affects international peace and security. Argentina has joined in the international community's efforts, with bilateral assistance programmes and with such initiatives as the "White Helmets" initiative. In that context, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations devoting their energies to the solution of this type of crisis deserve our recognition.

To grow and develop, peoples need to live in peace. We are dismayed to see that conflicts which could be overcome, such as those in Cyprus, the Middle East, the Great Lakes region of Africa, Angola and the Balkans, particularly Kosovo, persist in spite of the international community's efforts to resolve them. The situation of refugees, especially children, who are victims of these conflicts is a source of particular concern.

In 1998 Argentina will mark the fortieth anniversary of its participation in peacekeeping operations. Our contribution has cost the lives of Argentine citizens who helped to make this a more secure and stable world. The vast experience acquired over these 40 years has been embodied in the Argentine joint training centre for peacekeeping operations, and in the Argentine gendarmerie training centre that specializes in civilian police operations abroad.

Argentina's natural interest in the South Atlantic is reflected in our participation in the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, which brings together 24 African and Latin American countries from both shores of the Atlantic. I am particularly proud to announce that, on 21 and 22 October, Argentina will be the site of the fifth Ministerial Meeting of the countries members of the Zone.

Unfortunately, there remains an important unresolved issue in the South Atlantic: the sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland over the Malvinas Islands, a dispute whose existence has been unequivocally recognized in many resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as in various other international forums. I reiterate, with the same conviction as always, the legitimate and well-founded rights of Argentina in that long-standing dispute. And, with the same conviction as always, I urge the United Kingdom to heed the call of the international community and observe United Nations resolutions calling upon both Governments to resume negotiations on all aspects of this question.

The end of the cold war showed us that far more complicated problems have been resolved through frank, open dialogue and with a determination to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. I see no reason why the question of the Malvinas Islands should be an exception. Proceeding on firm footing, we have rebuilt our bilateral relationship and, for the benefit of the Argentine and British peoples, have strengthened political, trade and cultural ties. Evidence of this is the visit which President Carlos Menem is to make to the United Kingdom in the near future, for which both parties are engaged in enthusiastic preparations and which has generated high expectations at all levels.

Similarly, we have left behind the misgivings and resentments of the past, learning from our mistakes and creating a climate of mutual trust in the South-West Atlantic, which is today enabling us to cooperate in the conservation of fishery resources and in exploration for hydrocarbons. That cooperation renders still more

incomprehensible today's lack of communication between the islands and the mainland. There are few places in the world with such an unnatural situation. It is beyond doubt that restoring direct ties between the mainland and the islands would contribute to resolving the problem. We have no doubt about this.

Once again, I expressly reiterate Argentina's sincere desire to pursue a frank dialogue without preconditions. We hope that the British Government understands the full meaning of our offer and that it will respond accordingly. To the islanders I reiterate our unwavering commitment to full and unconditional respect for their way of life, their culture and their institutions. Our national constitution so provides, and that is the desire of the Argentine people.

There have been concrete advances on vital questions. The creation of a permanent international criminal court is one such example. Similarly, the recent special session of the General Assembly devoted to the world problem of drugs adopted innovative documents of great importance.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In these 50 years, the international community has become aware of the vital importance of human rights: today it no longer accepts what was once tolerated.

The deterioration of the environment, in its various forms, is one of the problems urgently requiring concrete answers and effective commitment by governments and civil society. Argentina will have the honour of hosting the fourth Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, from 2 to 13 November of this year.

We are convinced that a substantial part of our efforts to reform the Organization should be geared to designing a mechanism of closer and more effective cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions.

With regard to reform of the Security Council, we believe that situations born out of the Second World War cannot prevail indefinitely. It is necessary to find democratic solutions that will allow for periodic renewal within the modalities preferred by each region. The viability of this reform will necessarily depend on the degree of consensus reached. There are several aspects to be borne in mind. The first is that the reform must be legally valid, which means not forcing interpretations of the Charter with regard to the majorities required by Article 108. Further, the reform must be founded on political legitimacy. Any increase in the number of permanent members should allow for a rotation open to all States of the respective regions. The crisis of our Organization is fundamentally one of participation. Many small and medium-sized countries feel excluded. Only by allowing greater participation in the Security Council will we be living up to the democratic ideals of the end of this century.

The vitality of democratic ideals in the region was confirmed with the signing on 24 July of the Ushuaia protocol, which reaffirms the democratic clause in the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), Bolivia and Chile.

The visit by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to the countries of our region last July was a very significant event. Argentina had the opportunity to demonstrate its clear commitment to assuming its global responsibilities. The Secretary-General recognized this, especially as regards peacekeeping.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you my congratulations and those of the Indonesian delegation on your election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I should like to assure you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

To your distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, I wish to convey our felicitations for having so ably guided the fifty-second session to a successful conclusion.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedication to the reform and restructuring of the Organization, as well as for his determined efforts to seek a peaceful solution to conflict situations in various parts of the world.

One of the great ironies of our time is that at the end of a century in which the amazing advances of science and technology could have been harnessed to effectively address the problem of poverty, scores of millions more people have slipped below the poverty line.

At the same time, there has been a massive application of science and technology to increase humankind's capacity to deal out death and destruction. Even in the best of times, humankind's use of economic resources has not been marked by any deep sense of responsibility but rather by mindless consumption that has often led to the degradation of our environment. Unfortunately squandering resources is an old habit of the human race.

Mr. Filali (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Today, I fear that the awesome force of globalization, itself propelled by science and technology, is also being squandered: instead of serving to unify humankind in a decisive assault against the persistent systemic problems of our time, it is being used to press the advantage of the strong over the weak, thereby widening the gap between the developed and developing world.

Herein lies the tragedy of the human race: that our vast capacity to alter the planet on which we live has been matched to a parochial vision. Large and complex actions are motivated by narrow self-interest. And in the narrowness of our perspective we inflict great harm on one another. That is why the imbalances and inequities in international relations persist: we can never get rid of them until we attain that essential balance within ourselves, between the scope of our actions and that of our intentions.

Yet I do not despair. Against the backdrop of a century of conflict, one human achievement shines: the founding of the United Nations. It is admittedly a flawed achievement, for after five decades it has not yet brought us the global peace that we envisaged to be its greatest promise. But it has spared us from the horrors of another world war and possibly from a nuclear holocaust. That this flawed jewel of human reason should remain to serve us in a more effective way in the next century is an imperative. Through its instrumentality, it is still possible for us to tame the dogs of war and to exorcise the spectre of poverty. Through its processes of consultation and debate, we can still attain a broadness of mind that matches the global sweep of our actions. Through the habits of cooperation and trust that it engenders among its Members and among the countless individuals and institutions that participate in its dialogues, we might yet realize our shared vision of a global civil society. But first it must be reformed, further democratized and fully empowered.

The United Nations, as the central mechanism and catalyst for multilateral cooperation, must be enabled to play its mandated role in the achievement and maintenance of peace, security and development. It is therefore of the greatest importance that it be provided with the resources with which to carry on its work instead of being strapped for funds as it is now. The legal obligation of every Member State in that regard must therefore be strictly met.

It is also essential that the ongoing process of reform of the United Nations be intensified, particularly with regard to the Security Council, taking into account the desire of all States from all regions to participate in its work, as well as present political, economic and demographic realities. For indeed, developing countries are grossly under-represented on the Council especially at a time when its work is focused on conflict situations in the developing world. This anomaly has to be redressed by an increase in the representation of the developing world in the permanent as well as in the non-permanent membership of the Council. The legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Council's work depend on its representative character. Indonesia views the task of Security Council reform as a matter of urgency, but we must not be rushed into any hasty or ill-advised decisions that would be detrimental to the long-term interests of Member States. In this context, there is a need to continue and accelerate the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council.

If the cause of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, has not made substantive progress in recent years, it is largely because there are States that believe they have much to gain by their exclusive possession of nuclear arms. The unjustifiable privileges conferred on the nuclear-weapon States have given rise to a regime of discrimination and hypocrisy as well as a situation where non-nuclear countries wishing to enjoy the same privileges seek to become nuclear States themselves. Thus, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has not fully met its objectives, and the imbalances and discrimination inherent to it have persisted. Regrettably, too, the second Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference failed to agree on substantive issues. Still, we must persevere and prepare ourselves for the next NPT Review Conference and focus on the inequities and imbalances inherent in the Treaty. At the same time, we urge the nuclear-weapon States to implement faithfully both the letter and spirit of agreements relating to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We call on all States to refrain from

developing these weapons so that we may the sooner attain our ultimate objective of their total elimination.

The slow pace of progress towards non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament compels us to work even harder to achieve global disarmament objectives. The convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is essential for providing new political momentum that would enable and encourage the Governments and peoples of the world to move towards disarmament, including the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is therefore imperative that we take further concrete steps leading to the convening of the fourth special session.

While disarmament marks time, discord is rampant in the form of armed conflicts, disputes and tensions between and within States in many parts of the globe. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a source of continuing concern for Indonesia. Hence, we reaffirm our steadfast support for the full, impartial and effective implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In Afghanistan, we call on the warring factions to cease hostilities and to start constructive dialogue. The protracted civil strife in that country also threatens to spill over beyond its borders. We urge the parties concerned to cooperate with the United Nations in its concerted endeavours to restore peace and stability in the region. The dire situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for continued and concerted efforts in restoring peace and tranquillity.

Indonesia is appalled by the terrorist bomb attacks on the American embassies in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania that caused the death of nearly 200 people and the wounding of thousands. We reiterate our condemnation of all acts and forms of terrorism wherever they may occur and whoever perpetrates them. At the same time, we stress that we will never condone the resort to unilateral acts of aggression and violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States as a means to combat terrorism. We therefore urge all States to enhance international cooperation in the fight against terrorism while strictly observing and implementing the relevant international instruments.

My delegation welcomes the recent positive developments concerning the Lockerbie incident that culminated in the adoption of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998). It is our hope that discussions will now take place between the United Kingdom, the United States and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including on the appropriate trial arrangements. Early implementation of this resolution will hopefully lead to a definitive settlement of this issue and the lifting of sanctions imposed on Libya.

In the Middle East, the situation in the occupied territories keeps deteriorating as the peace process remains in the grip of a stalemate. Israeli policies and practices of oppression and provocation have continued unabated. In a blatant attempt to change the demography of the occupied territories, Israel keeps building new settlements and expanding existing ones. More ominously, it has arbitrarily extended the administrative powers of the occupying authorities in Jerusalem beyond the city's borders in a bid to consolidate Israel's hold on East Jerusalem and the West Bank and thereby entrench Jerusalem as its capital. This would pre-empt negotiations on the status of the Holy City and threaten to unravel the peace process, with grave repercussions not only for the Middle East but also beyond.

Peace and stability will continue to elude the region until Israel complies with its treaty obligations and unconditionally withdraws from all occupied Arab territories in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The peace process must be resumed and agreements reached must be implemented in their entirety and not selectively or conditionally.

In South-East Asia, the elections held recently in Cambodia, deemed to have been generally free and fair by international observers, should now lead to the restoration of normalcy in the country. It is time that all the parties in Cambodia resolve their differences in the spirit of national reconciliation and unity in the larger interest of their country, work together toward the formation of a new government and thereby contribute to peace and stability in South-East Asia.

The world economy is teetering on the brink of recession, if not already experiencing one. Economic output has slowed for the developed and developing countries alike, and growth in world trade has also decelerated. While official forecasts indicate a slowdown in the growth of world output to 2.5 per cent, any such forecasts may still be too optimistic. Only a little more than a year ago, the world economy was on a significant growth path, and the outlook was generally bright. In Asia, robust growth for decades had transformed much of the region into an economic powerhouse. Today, many of those dynamic economies are crippled. One third of the world is grappling with serious economic slowdown and the frightening possibility of a depression.

In the affected countries, including Indonesia, economic turmoil has reached a devastating level, pushing their economies into recession and their people to the very edge of their endurance. Unemployment has soared, and an unacceptable number of people have slipped under the poverty line. Education has been severely affected, and food is in short supply. The experience of South-East Asian countries in this financial turmoil has shown that even the most dynamic economies are vulnerable. In spite of the judicious macroeconomic policies that they adopted and the often painful structural adjustments that they carried out, the development gains they earned over the decades crumbled in the span of a few weeks. The lesson of this debacle is that the market is driven by sentiments as much as fundamentals, by perception rather than facts alone.

These adverse aspects of globalization have furthermore greatly eroded multilateral cooperation for development. The concept of development as a special part of a multilateral support system has been largely replaced by the laissez-faire approach to the globalized economy. This has resulted, *inter alia*, in sharply contracted financial resources for development for the majority of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. External indebtedness has escalated, and protectionism in international trade has risen significantly as more and more countries have become inward-looking in this era of globalization.

This dire situation will certainly impact on the implementation of the commitments agreed upon at the recent major global conferences, including in the fields of environment and development, social development, population and development, women and development, habitat and food. It is therefore a matter of great concern to all of us that the achievement of sustainable human development will be further removed from reality.

I believe that our troubles are less the result of the vagaries of globalization than the consequence of an economic doctrine that has dominated international economic relations for many years now. This doctrine presents unbridled liberalization as a panacea for all economies, developed and developing. In their desire to integrate themselves with the global economy, many developing countries have audaciously opened up their economies, only to realize that the social and political costs of doing so often outstrip the benefits. Moreover, the inordinate emphasis on unfettered markets has led to the neglect of such development issues as international cooperation for development, the need for non-commercial financial flows and the necessity of differential treatment for developing countries. Thus, the international agenda has been governed by the interests of the developed countries in opening up opportunities for foreign investments, private capital flows — that often turn out to be merely speculative — and the export of their manufactures.

In the face of such stark global realities, we must intensify international solidarity and cooperation. The international community should strengthen its management role in the world economy, in particular in the monetary and financial fields, including the establishment of surveillance and regulatory frameworks for short-term capital flows and trade in currencies, without constraining the liberalization of economies. This strengthened international management role is essential if we seek to avert future crises, alleviate the adverse impact of globalization and maximize its benefits.

We should therefore seriously consider various initiatives for enhancing global financial and monetary cooperation. The proposed United Nations conference on financing for development would provide an opportunity to explore various options towards financial stability and development. It is also encouraging that the two-day high-level dialogue of the General Assembly last week contributed to increased awareness and understanding of the economic and social impact of globalization and the need for international cooperation in addressing that issue.

Another important proposal is the one made by the Non-Aligned Movement for an international conference on money and finance for development in order to pursue comprehensive reform of the existing international monetary and financial system.

Because we want the North-South dialogue to proceed in earnest, we should broaden and intensify South-South cooperation. Decades of development efforts have greatly increased the economic complementarities among developing countries. We must tap these complementarities and strengthen partnership in the South. In this effort, our developed-country partners and international institutions can play a valuable role by participating in tripartite arrangements. In this regard, a number of steps to promote South-South cooperation have been initiated, including a high-level meeting on regional and subregional cooperation, which will be held in Bali, Indonesia, this coming December. The commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on South-South cooperation

will be held at a special one-day meeting in the General Assembly. Of great importance is the Group of 77 initiative on a South summit to be held prior to the Millennium Assembly, in the year 2000.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was proclaimed as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. To us in Indonesia who are now in the midst of formulating and initiating far-reaching economic, social and political reforms, this is a particularly significant occasion. In fact, in line with our commitment to the Vienna Declaration, we have just launched a National Plan of Action on Human Rights aimed at infusing the various segments of society and of the Government, including the national security apparatus, with values conducive to the promotion and protection of human rights. We expect to sign and ratify in the near future several more United Nations conventions on human rights.

The reform-development Government that is now in place in Indonesia will carry out vigorous measures to further democratize our national life. For we know very well that our economic recovery will basically have to be driven by confidence, on the part of the international community as well as on the part of our own citizens, in our own system of governance.

In the face of the challenges of our time, we in Indonesia will rebuild and refine the institutions that will make the laws of economics work for our society. At the international level, I believe that it is also necessary to build and refine the institutions that will make global economics work for all nations, whether developed or developing.

Globalization is not the demon that has been menacing our prospects for the future. But for too long we have accepted doctrines formulated and waved in the name of liberalization. The most perceptive economists of our day have been pointing out that error, and we must now heed them. Globalization and liberalization never required us to merely compete in dancing to the tune of the market place. It never told us to stop cooperating with one another. But many of us were enchanted with the gospel of unfettered laissez-faire until it was seen that the contagion of a financial crisis in one developing country in one corner of the globe could plunge the entire world into depression.

Now it is clear — if it was not sufficiently clear before — that we are stewards of one another's welfare, that we must extend a hand to every brother and sister who falters, or in the course of globalization none of us, developed or developing, will see salvation. Human destiny is indivisible. Let us never forget that again.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, His Excellency Mr. Roberto Rojas.

Mr. Rojas (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Costa Rica is extremely pleased at Mr. Didier Opertti's election to preside over the work of this fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We say this not just as the ritual greeting required by protocol, but as an expression of our deeply felt congratulations to a gifted citizen of the Americas and as an expression of our certainty that in this position the noble qualities you have displayed as a great jurist in the inter-American system and as the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of our sister Republic of Uruguay will once again be shown.

In presenting our respectful greetings to the Secretary-General, my delegation also wishes to express its sincere recognition of the enormously courageous efforts he has made in the Secretariat in favour of maintaining international peace and security, as well as his efforts to renew and modernize the United Nations. Costa Rica congratulates you, Sir, for your work and encourages you to continue in your endeavours, which do honour to Ghana and to Africa.

We are approaching the twenty-first century, the third millennium of our era, at a dizzying speed. In a few years, all of us here will be men and women of the past century. Nevertheless, we have the obligation to bestow upon the new millennium a world of greater solidarity. This subject calls for reflection. What have we done so far, and most of all, what are we doing about the imminent future? What positive contributions can we make to the new horizon that is opening up in the annals of history?

Undoubtedly, the very existence of the United Nations constitutes a most positive element. In 1945, this Organization emerged as a successor, on a larger scale, to the ideal of peace embodied in the League of Nations. The 51 countries represented in San Francisco aspired to build a world in which harmony would prevail and where international security would be supported by a far more solid foundation. Today, in this Hall, almost all the countries of the world are represented — we hope that in the near future there will be no exceptions — and each of

them has taken upon itself the obligation to abide by the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter.

Under the vigorous leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, the members of the Commission on Human Rights of the Economic and Social Council worked untiringly, freely and openly discussing the subject, and trying to harmonize approaches that encompassed both Western humanism and the ancient philosophy of the East. The fruit of their efforts was the adoption, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

During those bitter years, when the shadows left by the worldwide conflagration had not yet cleared, and those of the bipolar confrontation were already looming, some believed that the Declaration was a pleasant, romantic and entirely unrealistic suggestion.

Others saw it, on the contrary, as our species' best hope, in the conviction that international relations have ethical value only insofar as they guarantee the dignity of human beings, which is our very essence as rational creatures, through respect for our natural attributes. As the former President of Chile, Mr. Eduardo Frei Montalva once stated, the ratification of the Declaration was a demonstration of faith in peace, faith in the peoples of the world and faith in moral progress.

I am proud to be able to say that Costa Rica enthusiastically supported the Declaration; since then, Costa Rica has expressed its firm belief that human rights cannot be subordinated to the interests of States. Today our country is the seat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, and the University for Peace of the United Nations. Throughout Costa Rica's history as a Member of the United Nations, it has consistently been committed to the cause of human rights, in both the international arena and the domestic sphere.

On this occasion, I reiterate to the Assembly all Costa Rica's firm, solemn and unconditional commitment to continue fighting actively, whenever and wherever, to achieve full respect for all human rights.

Today my country reaffirms that its voice will continue to be heard in all forums on behalf of the noble ethical and moral ideals that we proclaimed 50 years ago.

Perhaps the most important legacy that the United Nations of the twentieth century will leave to the United Nations of the twenty-first century will be the certitude that human rights are a matter of universal concern. This conviction has allowed the broad conceptual, legal and political development of the subject of human rights. We have debated and signed pacts, conventions and protocols on increasingly specific aspects of human rights.

Despite this prodigious pile of legal instruments, humanity is still very far from having inscribed human rights on its very spirit. In many aspects, the commitment to an ethic of coexistence is as absent from the events of today as it was half a century ago.

Costa Rica observes with regret the instances of intolerance and violence that still persist in our world, the ethnic, religious, cultural, national, ideological or gender discrimination: the conflicts in the Balkans, the tragic wars endured by some African peoples, the situation in Afghanistan and the savagery of terrorism in various parts of the world. We are extremely concerned by the limited progress of the Middle East peace process and the increasing virulence of national extremism and religious fanaticism in certain countries.

My country believes that these serious problems must be faced from an ethical standpoint, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basic code for the conduct of both States and individuals.

The legal validity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is no longer debated today. However, for a long time, doubts and objections were raised as to the possibility of establishing mechanisms to guarantee it.

Thanks to the efforts of many years, the United Nations now has a High Commissioner for Human Rights. My country is proud to have been one of the main sponsors of the establishment of that office.

One of the most important events that has taken place this year was the successful culmination of the effort to establish an International Criminal Court.

The valuable experience of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia — of which the Second Vice-President of Costa Rica, Judge Elizabeth Odio, is a member — undoubtedly contributed to strengthening the conviction on the need for a permanent court to try the most serious violations of human rights.

My country embraces the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which took place in Rome on 17 July of this year, whereby the international

community rejects and condemns the most heinous crimes against our universal conscience. We are especially pleased that the Rome Conference included within its definition of crimes violations of the basic norms of international humanitarian law, applicable both to international and internal conflicts. In addition, in the light of the tragic experiences of some Latin American countries in the recent past, we are gratified by the inclusion of the legal definition of forced disappearance.

I am pleased to announce that, in the coming days, I will have the honour of signing the Court's Statute on behalf of my country, and I express Costa Rica's firm intention to proceed with its speedy approval and ratification.

My country is convinced of the necessity to establish a commission that will prepare, before the year 2000, the essential conditions for the Statute to enter into force. Costa Rica believes that the commission should be convened as soon as possible.

This year, in addition to celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, my country will celebrate another anniversary which, for Costa Ricans, is no less important: the fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of the Costa Rican army, decreed on 1 December 1948. Only 10 days later, Costa Rica adopted the Magna Carta of international ethics, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The abolition of the army was the culmination of my country's long anti-militaristic history. In 1866, the then President of Costa Rica, Mr. José María Castro, stated that one of the foundations of external peace is a strict adherence to international law, among whose prescriptions, as listed by President Castro, are dignity, good faith, loyalty and frankness. Today, as then, my country believes that in order to invoke international law and aspire to be a respected and valued State without need of military support, Costa Rica's principal duty is to govern its domestic and international conduct by a system of values that is grounded in the fundamental rights of individuals.

As a result of its historical and moral tradition, Costa Rica believes that there are no small countries when it comes to consolidating and preserving peace. Such has been Costa Rica's rule of conduct when it has had the opportunity, as it does now, to be a member of the Security Council.

For this same reason, Costa Rica has tenaciously supported the work aimed at general disarmament, and in particular the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, and has vigorously condemned the carrying out of nuclear tests. In that regard, my country urges all those States that have not yet done so to adhere fully and unconditionally to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Because of the values that have emerged from its own experience, Costa Rica has invariably repudiated terrorism in all its manifestations, wherever and by whomever it is committed. We do not believe that there is any justification for attacks against innocent people. Likewise, we condemn those Governments that support, shelter and give assistance to those who commit or instigate terrorist acts, in clear violation of their international obligations.

We believe that the international community must make special efforts to prevent and eliminate international terrorism. In this context, we stress the recent negotiations on an International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, and we urge Member States to sign it. We also trust that during this session of the General Assembly decisive progress can be made on the preparation of an international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. My delegation wishes to express how deeply pleased it is that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is to enter into force within six months. My country urges all those States that have not yet done so to accede to that Convention as soon as possible.

We are pleased to see that in Central America — notwithstanding the conflicts and the turmoil that our countries faced during the last decade — there are signs of progress towards the elimination or substantial reduction of military expenditures. Some countries have eliminated their armed forces, and others have reduced them significantly. Costa Rica does not intend to either export or impose any models on others, but it warmly applauds the decision of these brother countries.

The international community should acknowledge the specific progress that has been made in reducing military expenses by developing countries. In this spirit, Costa Rica wishes to propose the creation of a special fund for Central America, which would be established through contributions of developed countries and organizations. The idea would be that each dollar not

spent on military budgets would be at least matched by contributions for social development programmes to strengthen democratic systems in our region.

The Central American peace process has been one of the most successful ones of recent times. Only a decade ago, in this same Hall, we were exhausting ourselves discussing and commenting on the effects of the Central American crisis. Today, our countries rarely make the headlines of the international press. However, we would like to stress that, notwithstanding Central America's huge social and economical problems, it resolutely continues to work to consolidate for its children a more dignified and freer way of life, more in accordance with the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We have progressed in the areas of electoral democracy and freedom of expression. Now the time has come to consolidate participatory democracy. Therefore, at the end of this century and of the millennium, Costa Rica has begun a process of national political dialogue, with broad popular participation, in order to strengthen our more than 100-year-old democracy.

The Central American countries have worked strenuously for the integration and liberalization of our economies. We have achieved important progress in our integration mechanisms and structural adjustment processes. We are participating actively in the negotiations aimed at creating a free-trade area throughout the Americas, and we continue to maintain a policy of openness and commercial links among the Latin American countries.

Despite the regional efforts to redraft its economic plans and to adapt them to the world market's requirements, Costa Rica views with apprehension the creation of economic unions or commercial blocks that beget new discrimination against third countries. Similarly, new conditionalities in the commercial policy of the industrialized economies and the use of managed-trade mechanisms are a clear impediment to the ideal of free trade and create new inequalities of access to the world economy.

At the same time, we observe that, while the global trade in raw materials and agricultural products is losing its vigour, the exchange of high-technology goods is growing stronger. This means that the portion of trade traditionally carried out by the developing countries is becoming weaker in the global context. In this regard, Costa Rica urges the opening of markets, not only of the small economies, but also of the large and industrialized economies. Costa Rica also advocates commitment to the ideal of free trade that gave birth to the World Trade Organization and respect for its rules and resolutions in order to create an international environment more propitious for developing countries' economic progress.

Free trade encourages economic growth, and economic freedom encourages the creation of wealth within the nations. In accordance with these principles, my country undertook, in 1997, the chairmanship of the negotiating process for the free-trade zone of the Americas, and we are trying to contribute dynamically to its progress.

We are also making efforts to attain fair and non-discriminatory access for Central American products to markets in the United States and the European Union — the region's principal trade partners. In both markets, our countries have been negatively affected by the diversion of trade and investment that have resulted from the granting of preferential concessions to third countries, which are displacing our main exports. We refute the neo-protectionist arguments of the groups who are trying to obstruct the access of Central American products to those markets. For this reason, we are promoting the strengthening of the Caribbean Basin Initiative in order to correct those diversions and inequities. Furthermore, we believe there should be better opportunities for our exports to the European Union through its generalized preferences system. We are also promoting tariff reduction for agricultural products in all the industrialized countries.

At the same time, Costa Rica urges industrialized nations to cooperate with the efforts to strengthen the international financial institutions in order to ensure the stability of the world financial system. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and regional entities such as the Inter-American Development Bank must provide support to overcome the crises that cause financial instability, especially in the emerging markets.

While some believe that economic profit and ethics have nothing to do with each other, experience has shown us otherwise. Capitalism without rule of law and not subject to ethical rules usually causes scourges such as the spread of drug-trafficking, the reign of organized crime and corruption.

My country, like many others, has been affected by these phenomena. Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez

Echeverría, President of Costa Rica, is actively participating in both the fight against and the prevention of these scourges, and he gave proof of his commitment to this cause when he contributed to the success of the recent special session of the General Assembly on drug-trafficking. For Costa Rica, these struggles can be won only if they have a solid ethical foundation. Genuine ethical leadership can do more for the long-lasting and sustainable prosperity of a society than the best laws and the most detailed treaties.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not only a statement of rights, it is also a clear statement of every human being's duties to the community. One of the fundamental obligations of all persons is to behave fraternally with their fellow men and the environment.

Costa Rica has not been exempt from the problems caused by environmental degradation. However, my country's authorities and many organizations of our civil society are working strenuously to solve them. In a relatively short time, we Costa Ricans have achieved major progress in the task of recovering and preserving our rich biodiversity, while at the same time transforming it into a source of income. For example, Costa Rica is today one of the developing countries that has undertaken a leading role in carbon-fixation projects. We have negotiated important bilateral agreements based on the filtration capability of our forests. Those agreements have allowed us to become the first country to issue "sale of oxygen" certificates as specific proof of the quantity of captured emissions.

My country has been the recipient of important international cooperation programmes. In many areas we continue needing them. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that cooperation is a two-way street in which we can all teach and learn, give and receive. Costa Rica believes that its experience in ecological matters may be useful to many other countries and it makes it available to the international community.

Furthermore, my country would like to express its firm intention to offer technical cooperation for development, in the modest measure of its capabilities, through the action of a specialized office that is being established for such a purpose. Thanks to this office, Costa Ricans will share with other nations our experiences in the areas of health, education, ecology, human rights and electoral development.

For Costa Rica, the respect for diversity consecrated in the Universal Declaration must be an essential characteristic of the Member States of the United Nations. In this regard, we are always conscious of the valuable lesson of the African thinker, Salif Tall Tierno-Bokar, when he taught that the rainbow owes its beauty to the varied tones of its colours in the same way that the voices of various believers make up a harmony that rises up to divinity.

The survival of the human species cannot be based on a system of separate existences. Since human beings first appeared on the face of the earth, they must have had an awareness of their individual limitations and must have understood that they could not survive without the other members of their species. Today, such natural wisdom of our far-distant ancestors continues to be valid. We must live in community in order to build the future.

The concept of love for our fellow men is at the core of all religions. The ancient texts of the great masters of China, Mexico and India, and the Torah, the Gospel and the Koran, regardless of any differences, are all permeated with a deep sense of identity among individuals.

Moral and spiritual perfection, the dream of so many thinkers and the innermost aspiration of so many peoples, cannot be reached without a basis in the constructive and fraternal coexistence of all the nations.

At this moment in history, we the people who inhabit the earth must create a civilization of peace and solidarity. The twenty-first century should be the century of the culture of peace, which is also the culture of freedom, tolerance and solidarity.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Knut VollebÆk.

Mr. VollebÆk (Norway): This year we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In our global community, the issue of human rights is the concern of us all. For this reason the Government of Norway welcomes the fact that human rights are now being given increased priority in the work of the United Nations. Adoption by the General Assembly of a declaration on human rights defenders on the International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, would represent proof of our strong commitment in this field.

Human rights is basically about human dignity — about protecting the individual against oppression and exploitation, poverty and injustice, marginalization and degradation. The struggle for civil and political rights and for social, economic and cultural rights must be one and the same struggle. When we address breaches of civil and political rights, we must also address the issues of development and poverty.

As a new millennium is upon us, one of our most fundamental challenges is the realization of a humane world. This must be more than a vision. It is a moral imperative. All Governments endeavouring to implement and promote respect for human rights in their societies deserve our wholehearted support. Democracy, transparency and good governance are essential for economic growth, sustainable development and political stability. Governments that continue to disregard basic human rights norms deprive their populations not only of political freedom, but also of improved economic conditions.

The pursuit of a humane world requires new approaches. And new tools. A good example of this approach is the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which was negotiated in Oslo. With the ratification by Burkina Faso, presently chairing the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as the fortieth country, the Ottawa process has in less than two years produced a binding international legal instrument which will enter into force early next year. This has been made possible by a new diplomacy reaching beyond relations between States to engage individuals and non-governmental organizations.

Our efforts to rid the world of the scourge of anti-personnel mines must be intensified so that we can reach the objectives set out in the Ottawa process. Norway has already made a commitment of $120 million over a five-year period to mine action programmes, including assistance to mine victims. We call on other Governments to join in this endeavour. The United Nations has a central role to play in these efforts.

The partnership between Governments, international organizations and civil society demonstrated throughout the Ottawa process should be pursued in our new drive to restrict proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In recent years it has become evident that small arms are a formidable barrier to ending violent conflicts and consolidating peace, political stability and reconstruction of war-torn societies. We need to intensify and harmonize our efforts to combat the illegal trade in and proliferation of such arms, which account for most casualties in today's conflicts.

Norway has committed considerable resources to immediate action to assist populations in war-torn societies. We support demobilization and arms collection programmes in a number of countries, and we have raised the question of what role United Nations peacekeeping operations could play in these areas. To further strengthen these efforts, Norway proposes the establishment of a trust fund to combat the widespread proliferation and illegal use of small arms, in particular through the collection and destruction of such weapons at the end of armed conflicts. Norway will pledge 15 million Norwegian kroner (NKr) — about $2 million — to the establishment of such a trust fund and calls on other countries to follow suit. We propose that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) be charged with the management of the fund.

Norway is gravely concerned by the recent underground nuclear tests by India and Pakistan. I would like to emphasize the crucial importance of both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and achieve nuclear disarmament. Therefore, Norway urges all countries to join the NPT and the CTBT. We believe the United Nations should serve as an important forum for strengthened dialogue and exchange of information on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and that it should contribute to more transparency and confidence in these crucial matters.

The current world economic crisis clearly illustrates that we are all part of a single global economy. It also illustrates that we are far from fully understanding the powerful forces of globalization, and even further from being able to adequately manage them. The international financial crisis has led to soaring unemployment, plummeting living standards and shattered expectations of a better life for millions of people.

We clearly need a better understanding and better management of the global economy. My Government shares the serious concern expressed by the recent summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban. While the process of globalization has led to greater economic opportunities for many, a large number

of developing countries are being left even further behind in the wake of the increasing integration of the world economy.

As was pointed out during last week's high-level meeting on globalization and development here at the United Nations, there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation efforts if we are to maximize the positive effects of globalization, while minimizing its negative aspects.

While our planet is shrinking, the income gap continues to grow — between as well as within nations. At the same time, we are experiencing a steep reduction in official development aid from North to South. It is a regrettable fact that the industrialized countries are increasingly distancing themselves from the agreed United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development purposes.

Developed and developing countries alike are accusing each other of broken promises and failure to live up to their commitments. What we need is a new partnership based on result-oriented policies in developing countries and a commitment on the part of the developed countries to reach the 0.7 per cent target within an agreed time-frame. Norway, which has been well above this target for decades, is actively seeking to counter the growing donor fatigue and intends to further increase its official development assistance in the years ahead.

Many of our most pressing problems are international in nature and global in scope. International crime and terrorism, environmental degradation and the spread of disease do not need passports to cross borders. They are global problems, requiring global solutions.

As the world changes, so must the United Nations. We have previously commended the Secretary-General for his reform agenda. Much has already been done. It is now up to us, the Member States, to promote the reform process throughout the whole United Nations system.

We cannot ask the United Nations to do more and perform better, while at the same time cutting back on its resources. As a very minimum, all Member States must honour their legal commitments and pay their dues in full, on time and without conditions.

For the poorest and most heavily indebted developing countries, the debt problem represents one of the main obstacles to development. Urgent action is needed to end the unsustainable debt burden of these countries. Norway for its part will launch a comprehensive national debt relief strategy. The strategy will form the basis for our policy for supporting and strengthening the international debt relief schemes. It will also contain additional debt reduction measures on a bilateral basis which will be applied on top of the reductions made under multilateral operations.

No investments yield a higher return than investments in basic social services — in primary health and education. Since the World Social Summit, Norway has actively advocated the 20/20 principle. This calls for a mutual commitment between developed and developing countries to allocate 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of national budgets, respectively, to basic social programmes. We encourage all countries to adhere to this target.

Economic growth and social development underpin political stability. But political stability and good governance are also prerequisites for sustained economic development. While the United Nations should retain its vital role in economic, environmental and social affairs, the Organization must also involve itself more extensively in conflict prevention, crisis management and peace-building efforts. In two weeks' time we will be commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The United Nations has proved indispensable for maintaining stability, peace and security for millions of people, for which it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 10 years ago. At this juncture, we pledge our continued support for the United Nations peacekeeping endeavours. The Organization's capacity must be further enhanced, not least with regard to rapid response to armed conflicts.

In particular, we wish to honour those who have given their lives under the United Nations flag. The increasing number of casualties among United Nations personnel on missions abroad has made us more aware of the security situation for United Nations staff. Today, the Geneva Conventions go a long way in protecting uniformed personnel in combat situations. United Nations personnel working to promote and alleviate the suffering created by war are not protected in the same way under international law. It is therefore important to improve the security situation of United Nations staff, and we urge more countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

To further facilitate the United Nations role in preventing conflicts, Norway took the initiative two years

ago to establish a Trust Fund for Preventive Action. This fund has made it possible for the United Nations to undertake preventive missions and diplomatic initiatives it otherwise would not have the resources to carry out. Some countries have made contributions to the fund. We encourage others to do the same.

To enable the Security Council to better fulfil its prime task of preventing conflict and securing international peace, it is important to enhance its legitimacy while not compromising its efficiency. We need to find broad-based solutions which better reflect the political realities of today.

Conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building clearly require a coordinated approach. We must secure a better unity of purpose and integrate United Nations peace-building efforts with those of other stakeholders. Norway will be taking over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1999, and we are determined to further refine the already well established working relationship between the United Nations and the OSCE.

Most armed conflicts of today are taking place within States. Civilians are increasingly affected, and indeed singled out as military targets. In this context, the adoption in Rome a few months ago of the statute establishing an International Criminal Court is truly a historic achievement. The existence of a permanent, global institution of this kind will allow us to address the serious problem of impunity and will significantly enhance deterrence of the most heinous international crimes. The statute also provides for credible protection against biased, arbitrary and otherwise unwarranted prosecutions.

We need more, not less, involvement of the United Nations and regional organizations to prevent underlying conflicts from bursting into flames. In Kosovo, we have in the last few months witnessed an alarming deterioration, where the parties seem determined to resolve the conflict by military means. There is an urgent need for a ceasefire, access for international humanitarian organizations to all parts of Kosovo and stronger involvement by the international community, in order to facilitate a negotiated political solution.

Five years ago the Oslo Accord was signed in Washington, and gave hope for a peaceful future for the people of the Middle East. Although progress has been made, the peace process is today in serious difficulties. There is, however, no alternative to a negotiated settlement. The responsibility for advancing the peace process lies first and foremost with the parties themselves. We therefore urge the parties to do their utmost to build confidence and cooperation and to refrain from all unilateral measures and actions designed to pre-empt the outcome of the final status negotiations.

Although developments in Latin America in general have been positive over the past few years, there are still situations that give cause for concern. Every support should be given to the new Government in Colombia in its efforts to end the armed conflict. The international community should also give continued support to the implementation of the peace accords in Guatemala. Consolidating the peace is as important as ending the war.

Norway commends the Secretary-General for his report on security and development in Africa. Recent developments are indeed worrying and may threaten the stability and future prospects of large parts of the continent. The African nations themselves have the prime responsibility for ensuring a political climate that is conducive to stability and economic growth.

However, the international community must provide political support and assist in mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, human rights enhancement, demobilization efforts and institution-building. It is vital that these activities be coordinated and mutually supportive. Here the United Nations must play a leading role, in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and the subregional organizations. We follow with great interest the ongoing work by the Security Council in this respect, and we look forward to the discussions on the General Assembly's follow-up of the Secretary-General's report during this session.

If we are to meet effectively the many global problems facing us, there is no alternative to concerted multilateral action. We must build a future based on international law, where solidarity and social responsibility are not confined within national boundaries, but stretch across borders and continents. We, as Governments, must do this in close cooperation with civil society, with non-governmental organizations. In all this, the United Nations must be at the very centre of our multilateral efforts.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me, Mr. President, to offer you my warmest congratulations on your unanimous election to guide the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. The honour bestowed upon you attests to the good relations which your country, Uruguay, has forged over the decades with the nations that make up the international community. The noble task which awaits you, far from being merely prestigious or simply one of protocol, frequently proves to be both delicate and difficult.

It involves presiding over the most eminent forum of debate for world affairs during a period in which, in various places, one crisis follows another, such that around the world neither peace nor war prevails. I am convinced that your talents as a diplomat, your passion for peace and development and your enthusiasm will serve you well in dealing with the most complex debates and the most tangled webs of procedure. Rest assured that our best wishes will be with you throughout this session, which, we feel sure, under your expert presidency, will be crowned with success.

I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor, H. E. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, for the remarkable way in which he guided our work in the last session and for the personal touch with which he ensured and improved coordination between the main bodies of the United Nations. We feel certain that in his parliamentary career in his country he will display the same efficiency and skill he showed in this forum. Finally, allow me to pay an emphatic tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who, through his tireless commitment, has been able to restore confidence in our Organization and make it an incomparable instrument for international relations.

I wish to hail his efforts to bring peace to the world, and particularly to Africa, and the special attention he gives to the economic and political situation on our continent. I also wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate him sincerely on his excellent report on the work of the Organization, the clarity and conciseness of which will be very useful in inspiring our debate during the fifty-third session.

During the past year, the world has entered a phase of difficulties and uncertainties such as it had not seen for almost a decade. The crisis born in the most dynamic economies of South-East Asia has gradually reached other regions. Today it seems to threaten all the countries of the planet, from the richest to the poorest.

This shows very well the extent to which the phenomena of globalization and interdependence among States and peoples have spread. No country, no matter how prosperous, can now hope to escape a crisis such as the one South-East Asia has suffered and continues to suffer which now threatens other regions. This shows that the fight for development and the struggle against poverty concern all of us.

Emergent economies, which are paying the price of a crisis that, over these last months, has thrown tens of millions of people back into poverty and insecurity, are integral parts of a sort of a global economic and financial puzzle. The jolts these economies are experiencing weaken the whole system.

This risk, which everyone can see is real, should lead us to reconsider our traditional notion of the division between countries of the North and of the South. We should not, of course, ignore here the gulf between North and South or challenge the existence of the distinct forms of poverty that make for starkly different conditions of existence, and even survival, for the most destitute peoples of the industrialized countries and those of the developing countries.

What, on the other hand, is more and more questionable with the advance of globalization is the idea of a possible divergence of destinies, which could lead some countries — the wealthiest — to continue their march forward, while leaving the poor ones "along the side of the road", to quote a popular phrase.

The crisis we have been witnessing for a year now should convince us that there is a common destiny which binds together all Governments and all peoples of the planet. The latter, whether they are richer or poorer, are bound by the same necessity — that of progressing together along the path of development. The current crisis shows us another vital need — that of solidarity, for which multilateral cooperation is the prime instrument. The United Nations must once again become the natural vehicle of this multilateral cooperation. Unfortunately, we must note that this notion of solidarity, which has become an agreed formula in official declarations, is acted upon less and less in any concrete way.

We recall the famous objective — which a few decades ago seemed quite modest — of establishing the desirable level of official development assistance at 0.7 per cent of gross national product of industrialized

countries. In noting, as the Secretary-General has done in his report on the work of the Organization, that official development assistance has been steadily decreasing for a decade and today represents only 0.22 per cent of the gross national product of industrialized countries, we must recognize that this call for solidarity is reaching increasingly deaf ears in international forums.

Along the same lines, I would like to stress that the strategies for development debated and agreed among Governments, as well as the decisions adopted at the major United Nations conferences, so far have not been implemented to the desired extent, due to insufficient financing. The mid-term evaluation of the outcome of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development was in this respect quite revealing of the present financial limits for aid to development. An effort commensurate with the problem would allow us to radically change its basic elements.

The 1998 *Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Programme a few weeks ago, makes some significant comparisons. It shows, for example, that Americans annually spend $8 billion on cosmetics — $2 billion more than the amount needed to finance basic education for a large part of the world population. To quote the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization,

> "a bridge must be constructed between, in effect, the Dow Jones index and the human development index" (*A/53/1, para. 15*).

We expect also that a new drive towards cooperation and development will not only combat poverty and exclusion but also promote international peace and security.

Conflicts frequently have social and economic roots, and this dimension should be fully integrated into the approaches devised by the international community in the areas of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building.

I wish to reiterate, and express the support of Côte d'Ivoire for, the proposal made by the Secretary-General in paragraph 30 of his report on the work of the Organization to better use the possibilities of Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides that the Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council upon a request from the latter.

With the exception of very limited applications in 1949 and 1959, this provision of the Charter has not been invoked. Because it is based on fraternity, dignity and equality between peoples and States, solidarity needs to be the cardinal value in the new world that is emerging from the ideological battlefields of the past.

Progress in communications technology has today brought people closer than ever. Stepping outside of their own cultures, men and women can experience the same events at the very same moment. They are upset and shocked by the pictures and consequences of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. They are impassioned by the same sports events and are reduced to tears by exceptional events such as the liberation of Nelson Mandela or the fall of the Berlin Wall, which give true ethical significance to the evolution of humankind.

During the past decade, we have witnessed spectacular progress, in almost all countries, with respect to the positive values that cement solidarity between peoples. Almost all societies are now open and receptive to pluralism. Every day I see that the peoples of the African continent are hungering for participation. They wish to have their say in national matters and to take their future into their own hands.

Throughout the world, civil society is making its claims and aspirations felt. Everywhere Governments, to varying degrees, are becoming aware of this extraordinary change and, in the context of diverse political formulas and variable schedules, they are acceding to the demands of the people with respect to democratization.

This new global focus on human rights and pluralism is reflected increasingly in the international order. Buttressed by the non-governmental organizations, Governments have decided to ban barbaric weapons such as anti-personnel landmines, whose principal victims are civilians, especially children. The broad and massive support given by the international community to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which has been signed by 128 States and which will enter into force after the deposit by the fortieth State of its instrument of ratification, allows us to hope for success in the efforts undertaken to fight against another scourge — small arms and small-calibre weapons — which affects mainly civilians and foster criminality and insecurity.

Global progress on the ethical level is evident also in the adoption in July 1998 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus enshrining the progress begun by the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda. In this respect, the first judgments, handed down on 2 September last, have a dual significance. Fifty years after its adoption by the General Assembly, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide has now seen a concrete continuance: the appalling crime of genocide, repeatedly carried out since 1945, will no longer go unpunished. The second positive element of the judgments rendered by the Arusha Tribunal is the recognition that sexual violence committed systematically and on a broad scale in the context of conflicts meets the definition of the crime of genocide.

Another concern for my Government is the scourge of terrorism, a true hydra-headed menace that is blindly attacking in places where we least expect it. It is no longer enough to forcefully condemn this evil; we must try to extirpate its roots as it stems, with rare exceptions, from injustice or the intolerable humiliation of peoples. The fight against terrorism is first and foremost a fight against injustice in all its forms. Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its sympathy for those States that have fallen victim to bomb attacks. It reasserts its commitment to work in the context of cooperation with all States to eradicate these crimes, which cannot be justified regardless of their motivation.

The time has come, as was stated at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Durban, to convene an international conference dealing with all aspects of terrorism that would lead to a convention allowing us to eradicate this scourge.

To strengthen cooperation for development and promote democratization and pluralism are the two focal points for the action which the international community should take in order to allow peace and security to progress, which is the fundamental mission of our Organization.

This concern falls in line perfectly with the objectives of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, which, under the leadership of our President, Henri Konan Bédié, is committed to relaunching strong, sound and lasting economic growth and to forge, in a spirit of solidarity, a more united, homogenous society based on participatory, peaceful democracy.

At the political level, the cabinet reshuffle that took place on 11 August last resulted in greater openness and in new political blood. At the institutional level, several measures were adopted aimed at broadening and deepening the regionalization and decentralization process.

Moreover, constitutional reform is being undertaken in order to establish the rule of law, to consolidate State structures and strengthen representative democracy. The latter has given rise to the creation of a Senate, which will help us to strengthen the democratic debate and give us a more balanced representation of the regions.

At the economic level, let me stress that in 1997 — and for the third consecutive year — the rate of growth of our country's gross national product was 7 per cent. That rate, I would underscore, is higher than the demographic rate of growth of 3.8 per cent. Inflation was controlled at 5 per cent in 1997, whereas the rate of investment was 15 per cent of the gross national product, 70 per cent of which was private investment.

It is noteworthy that the management of the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization, which held its first meeting on 17 and 18 September last in Abidjan, reaffirmed that industrialization is a necessity for the economic progress of Africa and is the only means of transforming its economy in order to integrate it positively into the current context of globalization.

Africa will continue to rely for its industrial development on its partners from friendly countries. We wish here to welcome the initiative of the Government of the United States on partnership and economic growth in Africa which aims particularly to allow a number of American products access to the American market.

We wish also to express our gratitude to the Government of Japan for its continuing commitment to the development of Africa, as evidenced by the upcoming International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), set to take place in Tokyo in October.

We also wish to congratulate and thank all the Governments of the donor countries that have forgiven debts to the African countries, especially the least developed ones.

On the social level, I wish to take a moment to mention some points relating to health, a vital element in socio-economic development. Action in the field of health, as the Assembly knows, contributes effectively to the fight against poverty. Côte d'Ivoire has therefore

made this an absolute priority for several decades. Aware that our world has become a global village, we have tirelessly pursued these efforts within our country, while putting more and more effort into the promotion of health at the international level.

Several important recent events prove this commitment: the participation of President Henri Konan Bédié as the representative of our continent at the fiftieth anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO); the adoption by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) last June of two resolutions proposed by Côte d'Ivoire, one relating to the African fund to combat AIDS and the other on the African initiative to fight against malaria; and the launching of the initiative on anti-retrovirus treatments, for which Côte d'Ivoire has been selected as one of the countries participating in the experimental phase. In order to better mark our commitment to the success of this programme, we have decided to allocate the sum of $1 million to it.

Moreover, Côte d'Ivoire organized a regional meeting, attended by the Presidents of Benin and Ghana, to promote public awareness of, and the struggle against, Buruli's ulcer, a little-known but degrading and destructive illness.

The multiplicity of conflict situations in Africa has become a real subject of concern for the entire international community. Hence the Security Council met on 25 September 1997 at Foreign Minister level to consider the need for concerted international action to promote peace and security in Africa. At the end of that meeting, the Council asked the Secretary-General to submit to it by February 1998 a report containing concrete recommendations regarding the sources of conflict in Africa, way to prevent and address them, and how to lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth.

In response to this Security Council request, the Secretary-General prepared an excellent report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (S/1998/318), which gives a straightforward assessment of the political and economic situation in Africa and makes objective recommendations, while indicating the mistakes made by African leaders and the shortcomings in international cooperation in this area.

The report essentially always takes us back to the primary mission of our Organization: the maintenance of peace, and the principal instrument for this, which is collective security. The latter remains at the heart of the United Nations Charter. The original idea, it should be remembered, was that in the modern world, any conflict, whether regional or local, could affect the whole of international society, and that through alliances and interventions it could well spread, with all the devastating consequences imaginable.

It is in order to guard against these situations and to provide every means to react to them that the 1945 Charter, in Chapter VII, takes account of the regional character of collective security. The regional mechanism is intended to provide continuity and to strengthen the action of the international community in the maintenance of peace, without in any way challenging the primary role of the Security Council, which, duly informed of the initiatives undertaken by States bound by regional agreements, is the only body which can authorize the use of force.

It is in this spirit, and always taking care to refer first to the Security Council, that the system of regional security has always functioned, be it in Africa or in Europe, even though with the involvement of the Atlantic Alliance in the former Yugoslavia the situation was somewhat different.

The end of the cold war, with a backdrop of change in the general international security situation and an increasing will by the great Powers to limit themselves to interventions in the context of the United Nations, has undoubtedly contributed to the reactivation of regional security. What was at stake, we must agree, was the very survival of certain regions of the world, prey to violent upheavals and mostly abandoned to their own fate. Regrettably, this is the picture which we see in an Africa torn apart by conflicts whose scope and gravity the international community does not always grasp.

These are the realities which were in the minds of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, the Interior and Security of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) when they met recently in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, and then in Banjul, Gambia, to lay the foundations of a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and for the maintenance of peace and security. The resulting text, reached by consensus at the level of experts, will soon be submitted for adoption by the conference of heads of State and Government scheduled for the end of October in Abuja.

West Africa has plenty of experience in this connection, since in recent years it has had to mobilize twice in order to settle two bloody conflicts in Liberia, followed by Sierra Leone, and has thus acquired considerable resources under the flag of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The success of the organization in carrying out such interventions prompted it to institutionalize ECOMOG as its armed mechanism, which is mainly preventive. This is a big step forward for ECOWAS, originally created as a specialized subregional organization with the goal of promoting economic cooperation and eventually the integration of its member States.

This subregional mechanism will of course become part of the general system of the United Nations Charter and the regional system of OAU. It will cover all aspects of security, including natural disasters. Political considerations cannot be forgotten, for experience has shown that conflicts may well lead to the decay of governmental institutions, the economy and social and political institutions.

Under these circumstances, any intervention strategy is designed first and foremost to deal with disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of combatants or displaced persons, as well as the rehabilitation of infrastructures and above all the reconstruction of society, with democracy as the key word.

All in all, member States believed that it was precisely because it was conceived for development and economic integration that ECOWAS was particularly suited to undertake peace-building in the region. The implementation of the mechanism will depend above all upon the political will of member States. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire will be involved, as it was in the quest for peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and as it is now in the case of mediation to bring peace back to Guinea-Bissau.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Governments of the United States of America, France and Great Britain for deciding to harmonize their various initiatives to assist our armies in order to enhance our peacekeeping capabilities.

In this connection, I am happy that we are commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first peacekeeping operation in 1948, and I pay tribute to the memory of all the men and women who have given their lives in the service of the United Nations.

Assuring collective security in the context of credible international cooperation and guaranteeing fair, sustainable development is an ongoing challenge to the United Nations; it must urgently provide appropriate, concrete answers.

In this regard, I believe that our action must be conducted on three very distinct fronts.

In the first place, we must firmly recall, whenever necessary, the fundamental principles proclaimed by the San Francisco Charter concerning relations between States, and in particular the independence and territorial integrity of Member States of the United Nations. Since the end of the cold war, conflicts between States have almost entirely disappeared, and that fully reflects the legal force of the principles I have just mentioned.

Let me stress that in Africa the principle of the inviolability of borders is of capital importance, as the OAU has emphasized since its establishment. The upheavals in the Great Lakes region must be settled in accordance with this principle.

Secondly, it is necessary to discourage and ban from international society those regimes which violate the most elementary principles of democracy.

Finally, it is vital to enhance international peace by a clear delineation of the responsibilities of the United Nations and regional organizations. In this connection, we would like to note and hail the complementarity and harmony of efforts made, within the context of the United Nations, by the Non-Aligned Movement, the OAU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in order to put an end to the new crisis besetting the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their combined forces have secured the return to stability of several West African countries.

Here, I would like to salute in particular the action of ECOWAS and its military component, ECOMOG, and invite the international community to provide them with every possible support necessary for the accomplishment of their mission. This interaction between the world Organization and regional organizations must be further strengthened in the future.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to mention the veritable "sea serpent" of the process of reforming the United Nations and the United Nations system and to express a certain disappointment at the very limited

results we have achieved after several years of effort. The question of restructuring the Security Council seems to be at a standstill, even though, in almost ritual fashion, at one session after another we renew the mandate of the Working Group charged with reaching an agreement acceptable to all Member States.

As for the excellent reform programme that the Secretary-General presented to us last year, it has certainly been very positively received, but we have postponed certain decisions that are ours alone to make with regard to certain of his suggestions and recommendations. I hope that the present session of the General Assembly will enable us to enrich our thinking on reform and finally move on to action in this sphere.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abul-Qader Ba-Jammal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, I have great pleasure in expressing to Mr. Opertti our heartfelt congratulations on his election as President of the present session of the General Assembly. We are confident that his competence and experience will enable him to guide the session's deliberations and achieve its objectives.

At the same time, I should like to express our recognition of the good offices of Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the Organization, and of his great success in serving peace within the framework of preventive diplomacy in order to defuse international crises before they flare up and to protect innocent victims. I also have great pleasure in noting the intellectual and organizational efforts that are being made to revitalize United Nations activities in order to keep abreast of developments at the end of the present century and meet the demands of the next. We wish Mr. Annan every success in carrying out his future tasks.

The Republic of Yemen, its Government and people, has made consistent endeavours to strengthen democratic practices based on political pluralism, freedom of the press, guarantees of public freedom and the protection of human rights.

The Republic of Yemen has realized the vital importance of carrying out political, economic, financial and administrative reforms, together with a programme of stabilization and restructuring. When the due historical process brought about the unity of the country, Yemen inherited two political and economic systems based on different organizational, cultural and ideological structures. The Republic of Yemen, which represents the united Yemen, has therefore launched a process of radical political and institutional reform intended to bring about national, social and political integration, making democratic practices more deeply entrenched and increasing society's participation in the political decision-making process. This includes increasing the social role of Yemeni women, liberating them from all constraints on their participation and encouraging their integration in development.

Naturally, bringing about economic and administrative reforms based on an open and liberal economy, free trade and the increased participation of the private sector requires new legal and administrative mechanisms which may have a negative impact on segments of society with limited income and on the unemployed. Undoubtedly, this provides an incentive for the provision of assistance for all the countries engaged in this experience, including Yemen, in order to achieve the concrete economic and financial results that can alleviate the negative impact of such changes on the social sectors that are unable to respond to the process of economic and financial adjustment and appropriate restructuring in a natural and appropriate way. That is why it is imperative for the economic reform process to be accompanied by a social safety net to ensure social and economic equilibrium and alleviate the impact of change affecting the poor, unemployed and limited-income groups, with regard to their simple lives and subsistence existence.

This is a task which makes it incumbent upon the international financial institutions to recognize their responsibilities in those areas and to intensify their development programmes with social, demographic and environmental dimensions. The flow of investments and assistance from rich countries to the less developed countries have to be increased in order to bridge the structural gap and enable our society to integrate and increase its positive partnership in sustainable development.

The world today is based on integration and complementarity. It aspires to globalization based on free trade, free exchange and open markets. However, these can only be achieved by regional cooperation of government and private sectors of the countries of each

region. Thus our transition to globalization can be achieved through the bridges of regional cooperation, enabling us to make gains and achieve the common interests of our peoples without disregarding specificities or neglecting elements of harmony and regional integration. This approach would undoubtedly help in making concrete the spirit of fraternity, interdependence and integration, and would provide an opportunity to ensure that the fundamental factors for peace and acceptable coexistence exist, with respect to all regional parties, which will assist in ensuring a balanced and comprehensive world peace.

In this context, we demand that help and assistance be provided to the developing countries and the least developed countries, in order to enable them to minimize the negative impact of the globalization of the world economy on their national economies and to achieve levels enabling them to participate with the developed countries through competitiveness in producing high quality commodities at competitive prices. This could be accomplished once they have made reasonable progress in the context of regional integration.

Democracy, social justice, human rights, economic and political reforms and serious regional cooperation can only be achieved when there is peace, stability and full security. Today, given the unstable nature of peace in our region, we are again apprehensive lest the situation explode. This is due to Israeli intransigence and continuous disregard of the resolutions of international legitimacy. It is also due not only to the Netanyahu Administration's continued rejection of international resolutions obliging Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian occupied territories, the occupied Golan Heights and South Lebanon, but also of the undertakings of the previous Administration of the late Yitzhak Rabin at the Madrid Conference and in the Oslo accords.

The current construction of new settlements; the changing of the historical heritage of East Jerusalem, including the attempts to obliterate its Arab identity; the changing of historical realities and demography: all this testifies to the present Israel Government's flagrant obstinacy and arrogance. We therefore demand that these practices, which present further obstacles to the peace process, be halted forthwith.

In order to prevent the region being plunged back into the cycle of conflict, tension and bloodshed, we appeal to the international community to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to honour its international obligations, pursuant to the resolutions of international legitimacy and all other relevant obligations and agreements.

It has become clear that the policy of starvation, deprivation and economic sanctions imposed on States, whether individually or collectively, is of no avail as an effective means to the realization of certain political goals, especially in an era in which freedom, democracy, and enhanced respect for human rights and the right to self-determination are reaffirmed. Consequently, the victims of this policy are the most vulnerable sectors of the targeted States. That is why we must reconsider the policy of imposing sanctions, and must reassess their impact, reaffirming the importance of humanitarian values and ensuring that the real interests of peoples are not arbitrarily violated or threatened for reasons of which these peoples are innocent. As we have already said, sanctions are no longer a useful tool for the realization of political objectives. We must engage in peaceful dialogue, and define a time framework and agreed criteria for the sanctions before they are imposed and put into effect. We must also ensure that the people and the poorest social sectors are not the first and direct victims, as is currently the case in Iraq and Libya.

While reaffirming respect for international resolutions, we reiterate the need to lift the sanctions from Iraq and Libya. These have caused serious damage and severe human suffering in these fraternal countries. Children, old people and women have been particularly affected.

Terrorism has become an international phenomenon, and its effects and repercussions are not confined to any one country, people or ideology. It concerns all nations and peoples, and there is a pressing need for the international community to respond immediately to the demand to establish a political, intellectual and institutional system at the international and regional levels in order to combat it and eradicate the causes of this uncivilized and inhuman phenomenon, and to deal with its negative consequences.

In this regard, the Republic of Yemen has absolutely rejected all forms of terrorism. Yemen shares the feelings of every member of the international community: fear and concern at the continuation and increase of this anti-civilizational phenomenon which goes counter to all human values. We therefore call for genuine cooperation to combat this phenomenon collectively and responsibly.

My country pays particular attention to developments in fraternal Somalia. We hope that the international community will help to resolve the conflict between the various warring factions and political groupings. But at the same time we would like to remind our brothers in Somalia that there can be no solution without the cooperation of the Somalis themselves primarily with regard to the solutions offered to them from abroad.

Our concern for the situation in Somalia is a result of our feelings of fraternal responsibility, in addition to being a duty dictated by neighbourliness, especially since we are the only country in the region that has received waves of refugees from Somalia and other countries fleeing either national conflicts or purely economic circumstances. The Republic of Yemen has paid a high price and has sustained heavy suffering for its proximity to the Horn of Africa.

Our modest potentialities are not adequate to deal with this human influx into our country. We already have difficulty meeting the needs of our own population. The refugees have exacerbated our difficulties, and represent an intolerable economic and social burden. The provisions made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are insufficient to meet the needs of the refugees in our country. We therefore request the international community to provide us forthwith with assistance in carrying out our humanitarian responsibilities towards our refugee brothers. We further call upon all parties in the Horn of Africa and the concerned Arab parties to cooperate in reaching realistic solutions to this protracted crisis.

Many years have elapsed since the issue of reforming the United Nations was first raised, especially with regard to equitable geographical representation on the Security Council and the formulation of criteria to limit the coercive use of the veto. We fully support the call for the application of democratic norms in and universal representation on the Council in order to reflect the growth of the membership of the General Assembly since the 1950s and the major developments since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the cold war and the expansion of the horizons of globalization — all of which make it imperative to reform the Security Council. It is a pressing need that must be answered if justice and democracy in international relations are to be achieved, in conformity with the increased contacts and improved relations between peoples.

We therefore support the Open-ended Working Group set up for this purpose. We appreciate what has been achieved within the framework of its mandate, pursuant to the resolution of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly in 1993. We also appreciate the cooperation demonstrated by this Working Group. We call for the continuation of its work in order to fulfil its mandate at an early date.

It is incumbent upon us to cooperate in creating an appropriate atmosphere for the establishment of a new international order based on justice, freedom of choice and tolerance. It is our responsibility to work together for humanity and its prosperity, and to draw ever closer to our objective to live as neighbours on the planet.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

(*spoke in French*):

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to make a statement in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the statement made by the Japanese Prime Minister with regard to our satellite launching.

The Japanese authorities are now pushing the situation in the North-East Asian region to the extreme in the wake of our satellite launching. The satellite launch is entirely a matter of the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Launching a satellite is not a privilege for a few countries. Any country which has the capability to do so may launch a satellite. We are therefore not going to become embroiled in a quarrel with Japan, as we have not committed any wrongdoing with regard to the satellite launch.

I now wish to reiterate our firm and principled position on the frantic anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea campaign staged by Japan in the wake of the satellite launch. Japan is crying out against our satellite launching as a threat to security. Japan made public, all-out criticisms against the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea, inciting gangsters to assault Korean citizens in Japan. Furthermore, Japanese authorities are calling for a strike on our military bases. Japan accuses our country of not informing them of the launch in advance, though Japan has never informed us about the scores of satellites it has launched in the past. Japan sounds the alarm that our satellite launching is a threat to peace and security, while its launching of missiles and satellites does not constitute a threat to peace and security in the region.

We declare that this is the logic of thieves, Japanese style. Why is Japan so frantic, and why is it overreacting over our satellite launch? Japan is using our satellite launch as an excuse to realize its militaristic ambition. It is ridiculous that Japan is talking about sanctions and countermeasures. We are fully accustomed to sanctions. We have been living for more than 50 years under United States and Japanese sanctions and blockades. We will live in the future in our own way.

It is necessary for Japan to contemplate that reactions such as the hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, attacks on Korean citizens in Japan and calls for a strike on our missile bases pose a threat to peace and security. Japan is inviting disaster and destruction with these rash and thoughtless acts. Such hostile and belligerent acts lead us time and again to renew our determination not to tolerate Japan's arrogance.

The times are changing, despite Japan's wishes. Today is not the 1950s, when Japan earned big chunks of money by providing logistical support for the United States Army in the Korean War. We will retaliate against Japan for its hostile acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and will take revenge against it for its past crimes. This is our firm determination. It is very important for the Japanese authorities to have correct knowledge about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its people.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): That is a hard act to follow.

May I respond briefly to the remarks made earlier today by the Foreign Minister of Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands.

I welcome the Foreign Minister's references to the high level of cooperation between the United Kingdom and Argentina which increasingly characterizes our bilateral relationship. The British Government sincerely hopes that the progress which is being achieved will be built on and developed, and in that regard looks forward with pleasure to the visit which President Menem will pay to the United Kingdom later this year.

The British Government does not accept the Foreign Minister's remarks about sovereignty. We have no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the other British dependencies in the South Atlantic.

In the Falkland Islands we must heed the wishes of the people. The elected representatives of the islanders expressed their views clearly when they visited the United Nations for the debate in the Committee of 24 on 6 July. They asked the Committee to recognize that they, like any other democratic people, should be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination. As the democratic voice of the Falkland Islands people they reiterated their view that they did not want to be part of Argentina.

Despite our differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, we maintain a constructive dialogue with the Argentine Government on matters such as hydrocarbons, development and fisheries in the South Atlantic. We continue to hold discussions on these issues on a regular basis, while maintaining our position regarding sovereignty over the Falklands, and value these practical steps to develop United Kingdom-Argentine cooperation.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Argentine Republic, having heard the statement made by the delegation of the United Kingdom, would like to endorse the concepts expressed in the general debate this afternoon, 21 September, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, Mr. Guido di Tella.

The meeting rose at 7.40 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.9

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

9th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 22 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wijdenbosch (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Pierre Buyoya, President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Pierre Buyoya, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Pierre Buyoya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Buyoya (*interpretation from French*): The fifty-third session of the General Assembly provides us once again with an opportunity to look at the overall situation in the world and to reflect together on the future of the peoples and the nations that we represent.

But first of all, may I extend to Mr. Didier Opertti our warm and sincere congratulations on his well-deserved election, which is but recognition of his intellectual and personal qualities and which, I am certain, will ensure the success of the work of this session. We would like also to pay a warm tribute to his predecessor, who presided so brilliantly over the work of the previous session.

My delegation is pleased to express appreciation for the courageous and ongoing work being carried out by Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, in support of peace in the world and particularly on the African continent.

When on 25 July 1996 we had to carry out a very radical change of government in Burundi, the political situation was an explosive one. Every day Burundians were dying without really knowing why, and the threat of genocide and widespread chaos was a very real danger.

I shall not go into the details of that situation, as the Security Council, the Secretary-General and his representative in Bujumbura have followed on a daily basis the evolution of the crisis which has in recent years disrupted my country.

Since that change on 25 July 1996, we have stated clearly that restoration of security and the beginning of a peace process are our basic concerns.

This fifty-third session provides me with an opportunity to tell you about the efforts made by the people of Burundi, its leaders and the international community to attain our goals of restoring a lasting peace in the country. Despite some acts of terrorism, I can say to this Assembly that security has now been fully restored in Burundi. The threat of genocide so feared by its people is gone today. Two years ago the peace process was initiated; it is now under way and proceeding in a manner satisfactory to all those concerned. I should like to focus my statement today on this peace project.

98-85840 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The idea of a peace-process project in Burundi is based on the realization that despite the ethnic turn taken by violence which brought such tragedy to my country over the last five years, the underlying cause of the Burundi crisis is essentially a political one. That is why we are focusing our efforts on seeking a political solution to the crisis.

Two years ago we set in motion a peace process which was divided into two aspects: the internal aspect and the external aspect. At the internal level, the dynamic provided by the peace process led to a domestic agreement on political partnership. Two years ago, the Government which emerged from the change of 25 July 1996 and the National Assembly elected in 1993 began a dialogue geared towards a political rapprochement. This initiative led to an agreement on political partnership.

Today, we have a provisional constitution which came out of that partnership and which governs the institutions of our Republic, primarily the Government and the National Assembly. In Burundi, the political partnership is a reality not only between Government and the National Assembly but also with the majority of the registered political parties and the representatives of civil society who have joined the partnership for peace. It is within this framework that a negotiated Government, bringing together the main political forces in the country, is now in place and has been functioning for three months. The National Assembly elected in 1993 has been expanded to include representatives of other registered political parties and representatives of civil society.

I can say to this Assembly — and those who have visited Burundi recently have been able to note this themselves — that this partnership has transformed, and continues to transform, the political landscape in Burundi in a positive way. Today, the political class within our country is organizing a wide-ranging discussion on the partnership to enable the people of Burundi to absorb the idea of peace, the ultimate objective being stabilization of the country through the restoration of peace.

The Government, for its part, is preparing its programme based on the political agreement which emerged from the partnership. The major issues, such as democracy, justice, security and development, are in the forefront of this programme which the Government will be submitting to the parliament at its next session in October. My Government is determined to continue consolidating the partnership within the country. We deeply believe that this approach can establish the bases for an overall agreement associating our compatriots living abroad with our peace project.

It was the existence of this political partnership at the domestic level which made possible the beginning of a process of global negotiations involving Burundians abroad in the peace process. The negotiations, bringing together people of Burundi living at home and abroad, began on 15 June 1998 in Arusha, in the United Republic of Tanzania. The second negotiating session took place on 20 July, and the third meeting is scheduled for 12 October. These negotiations are proceeding in a manner satisfactory to all the participants: the Burundians, the facilitator and the representatives of the international community.

I should like to declare that the Government of Burundi is resolved to do its utmost to assure the success of these negotiations. We divided the peace process into two aspects, domestic and external, because it is simply a question of methodology. The peace process is one and indivisible. First of all, we wanted to get the people of Burundi involved in the peace process before the Arusha negotiations, so that we could take into consideration the recent experience of our subregion. Peace negotiations which do not involve the people often take a tragic turn.

I should like to declare from this rostrum that the peace process is now under way to the satisfaction of the people of Burundi. We are determined to resolve through dialogue the dispute pitting Burundians one against the other. Unfortunately, there are obstacles along our path towards lasting peace, the main one being the economic sanctions imposed on Burundi on 31 July 1996. These economic sanctions affect in particular the most vulnerable sectors of our society. They are destroying the economic and social fabric of the country and over the long term are jeopardizing stabilization over the long term in our country. In fact, the impact of the embargo on the people of Burundi is devastating. Let me give you a few figures: grade school attendance has dropped from 70 to 43 per cent; the vaccination rate has plummeted from 80 to 40 per cent and malnutrition among children under the age of 5 is now 43 per cent.

Moreover, the embargo imposed on Burundi is now enriching a few individuals in the country in a scandalous manner and is tragically impoverishing millions of people there. This embargo is eroding trust between the mediators and the parties to the conflict, particularly the Government of Burundi. Even though all the conditions imposed by those who initiated the embargo have now been met, the economic sanctions are still being

maintained. Today there is absolutely no justification, moral or political, for continuing the embargo against Burundi.

I would appeal to the countries of our subregion and to the mediator organizing the negotiations in Arusha to lift the embargo before it definitively torpedoes our peace project. Our appeal is also directed to the international community for support in our effort at peace-building in Burundi.

We must act now to concert our peace efforts. Tomorrow will be too late. Those who have sinned by omission will bear an important responsibility.

The other significant obstacle to peace in Burundi is the continuing violence perpetrated by armed factions based in the territories of certain neighbouring countries. I call on those countries to assume their share of the responsibility. One cannot both call for negotiations and tolerate terrorist actions by armed groups without jeopardizing the entire peace process. For negotiations to begin, there must be a cessation of hostilities.

Burundi, a landlocked country under economic sanctions, needs international solidarity. Humanitarian assistance must be stepped up in order to help those afflicted by this crisis. We would wish to see international cooperation with our country resumed without further delay. Security conditions are no worse in Burundi than in the other countries of the Great Lakes region. Burundians simply ask to be treated fairly. Our commitment and resolve to achieve peace in Burundi through dialogue must no longer be called into question. The facts today speak for themselves. We are negotiating with all Burundians who have political demands.

My country's domestic concerns will not allow me to forget the other problems afflicting Africa and the world. Far from it.

At this time of globalization, a sustained effort must be made by the international community to promote balanced development throughout the world. Africa deserves special attention. If one advocates development through trade, then one must also increase official development assistance to stimulate the growth of economies that remain fragile. Africa is being crushed by the weight of its debt. The burden must be eased and eliminated for the poorest countries. Globalization without solidarity with the poorest nations will not lead to a peaceful world.

In order to adapt to inevitable changes, the developing countries must organize themselves. Here, I envision the creation of regional areas of integration that will make our economies viable. We are in favour of regional integration, but one that respects the identity and sovereignty of each country. We are opposed to regional integration that includes the domination and hegemony of the most powerful.

Regional economic integration can be achieved, however, only in secure regions. Our region of the Great Lakes remains subject to extreme instability. This cyclical insecurity has endured for decades and has unleashed floods of refugees. Entire defeated armies move through the region, which has already experienced an unprecedented genocide.

We continue to follow very carefully the evolution of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish to reaffirm that our country, Burundi, is in no way involved in that conflict. However, we remain concerned, on the one hand, by a certain tenor of statement that pits peoples against peoples on the basis of ethnic identity; and, on the other, by militias and certain rebels, whom we in the region remember only too well. I would urge all participants in this conflict not to allow themselves to be entrapped and led down that road, because it leads only to danger that could engulf the entire region in flames.

Burundi will continue to ensure that its security is not destabilized. To that end, we shall take all appropriate measures. We continue to advocate peaceful means and dialogue to resolve this conflict. If the Government of Burundi is asked to contribute to a political solution, it will be very happy to do so.

In Burundi, we believe that the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations should coordinate their efforts more effectively in seeking a solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly when we consider the limitations of subregional organizations.

At the global level, every region of our planet faces varying degrees of environmental degradation, terrorism, endemic disease, drug abuse and hunger, to mention only the most widespread threats. To cope with this situation, the United Nations will have to play a decisive role. Our Organization has, in the past, demonstrated its strengths and its weaknesses.

To take up these many challenges, the United Nations must open itself up and become more democratic if it is to become more effective in addressing the realities of the modern world. In order better to resolve the problems of peace, the Security Council should be judiciously expanded to include other Members of the Organization.

Within the United Nations, Burundi will continue to raise its modest voice against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and in favour of allocating greater resources to combat poverty and encourage education and health, particularly in developing countries — in short, to build a more balanced and fairer world. In our view, this is the challenge facing our Organization as we approach the new millennium.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pierre Buyoya, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Flight-Lieutenant (Rtd.) Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Flight-Lieutenant (Rtd.) Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Mr. Jerry John Rawlings, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rawlings: Thank you very much, Sir. But I prefer to be called "Flight-Lieutenant" and not "Mr."

I join preceding speakers in congratulating the President and the other members of the Bureau on your election to direct the affairs of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. I am indeed very confident that under your wise leadership the outcome of our deliberations will constitute a great step forward in our efforts to build a new world which meets the aspirations of our peoples in the search for peace, justice and prosperity.

May I also avail myself of this opportunity to express the deep appreciation of my delegation for the remarkable achievements of Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, under whose able guidance the Assembly at the preceding session took very important decisions on United Nations reform intended to prepare the Organization for the immense challenges ahead as we move into the twenty-first century.

In these laudable efforts, we also recognize the bold initiatives and drive of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose vision for the future of the United Nations, corresponding so much with that of the general membership and the peoples of the world, facilitated the continuing process of reform. We in Ghana and indeed in Africa are proud to have for a son a man of his stature and drive.

The commemoration this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affords us the opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved over the years and map out well-defined strategies to improve the quality of life of our peoples, by effectively promoting and protecting their fundamental rights, which the Declaration holds as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations.

Women's rights must be at the centre of that process and we should remain focused on their worldwide promotion and protection. It is their right. It is our obligation. The work of the United Nations in strengthening the equal status and the human rights of women, from the World Conference on Human Rights to the Fourth World Conference on Women, is indeed commendable.

Almost fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 12 million children under five years of age die every year from preventable diseases, 200 million children under five years of age are undernourished and 110 million are denied basic education. Eight hundred million people have no access to the most basic health services, and 1.3 billion human beings live in abject poverty around the world. This state of affairs persists because of the inequitable international economic system which discriminates against a developing world, particularly Africa.

The President took the Chair.

The persistent critical economic situation in Africa should be of great concern to the international community and should prompt us all to take effective and urgent

measures to address its underlying causes. Many of our countries, particularly the poorer ones, continue to suffer from a heavy debt burden and crippling debt-servicing obligations, which, by diverting resources away from development, prevent us from providing adequate social services to our populations in basic areas such as education and health and therefore reduce our capacity to compete in the global market.

In this regard, we stress the need for debt-relief measures to be accompanied by concessional financial assistance, particularly to the least developed countries, with the aim of enhancing the implementation of economic reforms and creating a stable environment that enables countries to extricate themselves from the debt overhang.

The international reverberations of the recent financial turmoil in Asia and elsewhere, I believe, point to the futility of any notions that any nation can play outside the rules, that any nation in this world can stand alone.

In my view, the present approach of certain industrialized countries who require developing countries to adhere to standards or policies which they themselves do not observe, or seem unable to observe, will severely test relations between the developed and the developing countries in the next century.

We must stand together if we are not to jeopardize the prosperity enjoyed by hundreds of millions today and the hopes of billions more for a life of dignity and a healthy measure of comfort — nothing more, nothing less.

The new times we live in require new ideas suitable to the dynamics of today. Policy makers and opinion leaders in the developed countries bear great responsibility in this regard, as we all do, for providing very clear leadership of integrity. Much is demanded of those countries that share a great part of the blame for the present state of the world, as they no doubt have the means to be able to provide what it takes.

Even though it had been clear for some time that sustainable development around the globe could not be achieved without a measure of fairness in economic relations between North and South, because of short-term considerations of profit and advantage, the countries benefiting from the unjust economic order chose to ignore the serious impact of that situation on living standards in most parts of the world as well as in limiting world economic growth.

Instead, we received sermons on the truths, realities and moralities of life, and countries and peoples were victimized if they were shown not to have lived up to expectations. That was the price, in other words, that we had to pay. It was obvious, however, that whenever a situation required moral leadership from the capitals of those countries which preached morality in the first place, that morality manifested itself as no more than national interest.

No one questions the need for States to look out for their national interests. However, it is the blindness to the need for enlightened self-interest that has lain at the heart of the divisions between our States for so long, and which has finally shaken the economic confidence of people, whether in the North or the South, in recent times.

The end of the cold war has unleashed new threats to global and regional peace. Intra-State conflicts, rooted in ethnic, racial and religious intolerance, pose a threat to the security of many States and regions. The tardiness and selectivity of the international community in dealing with some of these conflict situations have been rather disturbing, as they have undermined the concept of collective security enshrined in our noble Charter. Article 24 of the Charter not only confers "primary responsibility" for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council, but also calls for "prompt and effective action" when a breach occurs. However, in our part of the world, we often ask ourselves where the "prompt and effective" action of the Council was when Rwanda was on fire. Where was the Council when Liberia was in turmoil? Where was the "prompt and effective action" when the people of Sierra Leone agonized under the yoke of a brutal dictatorship?

In the face of the selectivity of the Security Council in dealing with issues of international peace and security, and in spite of our region's meagre resources, we have had to rely on our own efforts to respond to internal strife in some of the countries in our neighbourhood. We call on the Governments of those countries to remain steadfast in making sacrifices and doing everything possible to bring about national reconciliation, peace and stability.

The international situation continues to be poisoned by unilateral economic, commercial and financial sanctions, which in some cases even have extraterritorial consequences.

We have seen such actions undermine the positive socio-economic gains made by Cuba over the last few decades, with the resultant deprivation of an entire population's human rights and dignity. The world stands to gain from a peaceful solution to the differences between the United States and Cuba, and we call on the United States to settle its differences with Cuba through negotiations on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

We are equally concerned by the effect of the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. However, we are extremely pleased with the recent developments concerning the possible trial of the two suspects in the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie.

We call upon the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Netherlands to engage in discussions with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, directly or through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to arrive at trial arrangements which will offer appropriate safety measures for the two suspects.

On Western Sahara, we call on the Security Council and the Secretary-General to continue their efforts for a peaceful and just solution to the persistent outstanding differences and for a free and fair referendum. We will not have a neighbouring African country recolonized by another African country.

Ghana shares the concerns and frustrations of the international community on the deadlock over the Middle East peace process. We believe that initiatives taken so far in support of the process, including the Madrid and the Oslo agreements, as well as the principle of land for peace, are an adequate basis for a just and long-lasting settlement. The international community is unanimous in its determination to see a just peace in the Middle East, and the Palestinian question no doubt holds the key.

My delegation's condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism and mercenary practices is rooted no doubt in their tragic consequences on the political stability as well as the economic and social development of States. Terrorist acts, in particular, are totally unacceptable as a means of seeking redress for any grievance, achieving political ends or supporting a cause. It is in this connection that we have condemned the recent terrorist bomb attacks in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam that claimed hundreds of innocent lives, injured thousands of people and caused massive destruction to property, as well as the persistent threat to Americans around the world.

I am proud to say that since joining this Organization on 8 March 1957, only two days after acceding to independence, Ghana has remained true to its commitments to contribute to the promotion of international peace and security, the principal *raison d'être* of this Organization. Only three years after independence, in 1960, my country, Ghana, responded to the call of the Organization and committed troops and resources to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in what was then the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo.

We have since remained actively engaged, consistently participating in the peace efforts of the Organization, in all regions of the globe. As I speak, Ghana is listed as one of the major contributors of troops to United Nations peacekeeping efforts, with personnel serving in eight United Nations missions in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

The Government and people of Ghana are indeed proud of our participation in these international peace efforts, even though it has been at great expense to our developing country. It is not a sacrifice in material resources alone, but also in human terms, as Ghana, as well as her neighbours, has lost her sons and daughters in these operations.

We welcome the adoption last year of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. My country was among the large number that signed the Convention in Ottawa last December, and it is in the process of its early ratification. We hope that conditions will, in the not-too-distant future, permit the Convention's universal adoption, to enable us to rid our planet of these inhumane weapons which continue to kill and maim innocent civilians long after the conflicts in which they were laid. We are sincerely of the view that the international community should pay greater attention to demining and rehabilitation, because of the havoc that the presence of mines wreaks on the economies of the affected countries as well as on the contribution of millions of peasants towards the feeding of their families.

The United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, convened in Rome in June and July this year, is a welcome development in our collective effort to provide a legal and institutional framework to hold perpetrators accountable for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and serious violations of

international humanitarian law. It is our sincere hope that the spirit of compromise that led to the overwhelming endorsement of the Rome treaty will similarly be brought to bear on the work of the Preparatory Commission, to ensure the early establishment of a fully functional and effective court.

Once again Ghana has the unpleasant task of joining others to express concern at the financial situation that persists in the Organization, characterized by very little cash and huge arrears. The persistent critical financial situation places our Organization in jeopardy at this time of reform. It is regrettable that a number of States are neither paying their assessed contributions nor making full payment of their arrears, while some persistently aggravate the situation by attaching unreasonable as well as unacceptable conditions or benchmarks to the discharge of their Charter obligations. In this respect, let me admit that there are very small but extremely rich countries among us who could have helped without making a dent in their national wealth and resources.

Support for the United Nations must be demonstrated not in pious proclamations but in the willingness of all Member States to meet Charter obligations to the Organization, including payment of our contributions to ensure that the Organization is put on a sound financial footing to tackle its mandates and pressing commitments.

I wish to conclude by expressing once more my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Assembly for the comprehensive reforms being undertaken to restructure, revitalize and democratize the United Nations. I congratulate most sincerely the Secretary-General and the Assembly on their achievements so far. And I assure you that my delegation, my country, will continue to work with you in this reform process and in all aspects of the Organization's work in order to ensure that the Organization continues in the twenty-first century to better serve the global community and generations yet to come in the maintenance and enhancement of our collective security and the promotion of international cooperation to advance the economic and social well-being of all our peoples.

That happens to be the vision of the founding fathers of the United Nations. And this is our commitment.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Flight-Lieutenant (Rtd.) Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, President of the Council of the European Union and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria.

Mr. Schüssel (Austria): I have the honour and privilege to speak on behalf of the European Union. In this capacity I would like to extend my warm and sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We are pleased that a distinguished Latin American statesman chairs our deliberations. I am confident that your experience, talent and energy will ensure a successful outcome for the work of our session.

I wish to express the high appreciation of the European Union for the outstanding leadership of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and for his excellent work at the helm of the United Nations. His "quiet revolution" of institutional reforms has our full support. We are looking forward to working with him to prepare the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000 in order to meet the challenges of human solidarity.

At the turn of the century, we live in a fascinating and challenging, but also difficult and complex, period of time, characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. Local wars and ethnic conflicts have continued and new ones have broken out. "Peace processes" have had rather mixed success, and some show a distressing tendency to unravel. The threat from weapons of mass destruction is as alarming as ever. A majority of the Earth's population still lives in poverty. Enormous environmental disasters hit our planet all too often, and organized crime, illicit drug trafficking and terrorism are the plague of our time. Financial and economic crises of unprecedented dimensions do not spare any region — Asia and Russia being the most recent examples.

The impact of these phenomena is felt directly and immediately by every citizen in the world. Economies are more intertwined than ever, and information travels around the globe within seconds. No one can escape the forces of globalization, but all of us can join not only in confronting transnational threats but also in collecting the

fruits of globalization. The United Nations has a key part to play in this collective effort. Only our universal organization has the scope and legitimacy to generate the principles, norms and rules that are essential to harness the potential of globalization while managing its negative effects.

Today's turmoil in the financial markets can be dealt with only at a global level, addressing the political causes as well as the financial and economic aspects. It is imperative that industrial and developing countries elaborate a common strategy in a framework of international financial cooperation, including the G-22, and formulate standards and rules for financial transactions. What is needed now is leadership. Short-term remedies are not enough; long-term forward looking policies are required. We must invest in both sustainable growth and solidarity. As serious as the crisis is, there is every reason not to panic. The world economy is basically sound, with two thirds — 70 per cent — of the world's population living in growth zones. We sometimes forget that.

The European model of social market economy has served well to harness the forces of globalization. Respecting the interests and wishes of the people, showing solidarity for the poor and disadvantaged, promoting social partnership between employers and employees and combating unemployment by creating jobs and so on are intrinsic elements of a social market economy. We believe that this European model of a social market economy deserves serious consideration in our turbulent and complex age. To be honest, this is a kind of third way some are looking for.

Europe's answer to the challenges of globalization is two millennium projects which will shape the face of our continent: the introduction of the euro and the enlargement of the Union.

The single currency will improve the functioning of the internal market, help to secure employment and provide incentives for the market-oriented structural reforms needed to safeguard Europe's competitiveness. The creation of the euro has the potential to stabilize the international economic environment and to promote international trade. From the perspective of the world economy, this will be the most important effect of the single currency. Markets have already anticipated the introduction of the euro, as borne out by the monetary stability of the participating currencies, at a time when other countries and regions are experiencing severe financial crises. Consequently, the euro is creating a zone of stability and prosperity which will benefit the entire world economy.

The second millennium project, which has far-reaching consequences, is the enlargement of the European Union. We are convinced that the integration of our neighbours is the best way to safeguard lasting political stability and economic progress in Europe. Successful enlargement will bring a new dynamic to the Union and strengthen its role to the benefit of all the citizens of both Europe and the world. The process of enlarging the Union does not mean that the Union will become more inward-oriented or Eurocentric. On the contrary, we are convinced that the Union must continue to be outward- and forward-looking. Enlarging the European Union will go hand-in-hand with developing our traditional relations with countries and exporting stability around the world.

As President of the Council of the European Union, I would like to assure Members of the United Nations that an enlarged Union with a strong common currency will be a reliable and strong partner for the United Nations and the world.

I would like to stress the paramount interest of the European Union in the political and economic stability of Russia. We hope that the new Government of Russia will be able to re-establish confidence among the Russian people and the international financial community. We stand ready to cooperate further with the Russian authorities in support of sustained efforts towards stabilization and reform.

Let me now draw attention to a subject to which I attach the highest priority: the protection of the most vulnerable group in societies, our children. I am deeply convinced that a far-sighted policy, both internal and external, should be geared to the well-being of future generations. We, the statesmen, diplomats and decision makers of 185 nations, meeting in this Assembly, bear an enormous responsibility to formulate future-oriented policies in the service of young citizens on our planet. These include a fundamental principle. Our children must live childhood in peace, freedom, prosperity and security, free of abuse, violence and exploitation.

Millions of children and juveniles are exploited worldwide, their basic human rights denied in many ways. A global coalition must be forged to fight the abuse of children, in particular sexual exploitation, the despicable phenomenon of child soldiers and child labour.

The European Union supports the International Labour Organization draft convention on child labour. The involvement of children in armed conflict and its

disastrous consequences require particular attention and action by the international community. I call upon all States and parties to conflicts to respect existing international standards, to stop the use of children as combatants and to fully support the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu.

Sexual exploitation of children is one of the most abhorrent phenomena of our time. The European Union puts special emphasis on combating child prostitution and child pornography. This includes the spread of child pornography on the Internet. New information technologies create new challenges. But that is why, more than ever, we have to prohibit the production, dissemination and possession of child pornography in all its forms — print, audio, electronic media and video. Many countries have already enacted such legislation nationally. But only a worldwide ban on child pornography will be effective. In this context, we hope that the optional protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography can be finalized in the near future.

Legislative action has to be complemented by improved cooperation between national and international law enforcement and judicial authorities. I appeal to Governments, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and private business — including online services and Internet service providers — to join efforts in a crusade against child abuse. For every day we fail to do so, the innocent children of our world pay a terrible price.

Human rights, good and democratic governance and the rule of law have moved to centre stage in promoting peace, security and sustainable development. Respect for and promotion of human rights have become a crucial component of Union policies. They play a significant role in contractual relations with third countries, in development cooperation and in the common foreign and security policy.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the five-year implementation review of the Vienna Declaration should provide an opportunity for a critical assessment of the progress made by all States. The Council of the European Union, in commemorating this anniversary on 10 December this year in Vienna, will send a strong signal to further strengthen the United Nations human rights programme, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The European Union will continue to work towards the full integration of human rights, as well as a gender perspective, into all activities of the United Nations system. We hope that the adoption of the human rights defenders declaration will send a strong message of support to human rights activists worldwide. The European Union welcomes the progress on a draft protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and a draft protocol to the Convention against Torture. We hope that the respective Working Groups can complete their work next year.

I would like to stress our strong interest in cooperating with other Governments and civil society to improve the human rights situation in all parts of the world. To this end, the Union supports a wide range of projects and programmes in the field of human rights, the rule of law and electoral assistance. We will also work for the complete abolition of the death penalty. In the meantime, we shall call for a moratorium on all executions worldwide.

The international community is confronted with an increasing number of new and more diverse forms of conflict, which often turn violent. Apart from taking measures of operational prevention, which address the consequences of conflicts and range from preventive diplomacy to all forms of peaceful settlement of disputes and the preventive deployment of forces, we have to concentrate on the root causes, such as disrespect for minorities. We therefore need a pro-active policy, focusing on preventing the outbreak of violence at an early stage.

Early warning is a key element of a comprehensive strategy of conflict prevention and a prerequisite for any further action. Finally, post-conflict rehabilitation has to be more comprehensive and coordinated to address the wider issues of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Union firmly supports United Nations efforts to strengthen its conflict-prevention and crisis-management capacity.

We are deeply committed to the primary role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and to the core functions of United Nations peacekeeping operations. This strong support is reflected in the facts: 4,500 troops and policemen from European Union countries serve in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which is one third of United Nations peacekeeping personnel; thousands more men and women from the European Union have served and are serving in United Nations-mandated operations such as the Stabilization Force in Bosnia; and our financial

contribution represents almost 40 per cent of the United Nations peacekeeping budget.

We welcome the increasingly multidimensional nature of peacekeeping operations, which poses new challenges to the average peacekeeper in the field. Peacekeeping today encompasses not only military tasks but a variety of other functions, such as civilian police activities, humanitarian assistance, demining, disarmament measures, demobilization, reintegration of former soldiers, enhancing and monitoring respect for human rights and, last but not least, public information. At United Nations Headquarters, this requires a strong Department of Peacekeeping Operations which is able to fulfil its functions effectively. In the wake of the decision by the General Assembly to reduce progressively the number of posts filled by personnel on loan, we strongly underline that the Department's expertise and gains of recent years must be retained.

The European Union is gravely concerned about the increasing security threat to United Nations personnel in the field, not least to unarmed military observers and civilian personnel. Bearing in mind the responsibility of the United Nations and Member States towards those participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations, we wish to recall the obligation of host countries and parties to conflicts to ensure the safety of these operations.

I would like to express our admiration and gratitude to all the men and women who serve under the banner of the United Nations in peace operations around the globe. They show remarkable courage, motivation and idealism. Likewise, I wish to express my deep sympathy to the families of United Nations personnel who have lost their lives in the service of peace.

The European Union attaches the utmost importance to progress in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as a key element in the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of security. In this respect, the Union wishes to reiterate its deep concern about the grave threat to international peace and security posed by the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan in May this year. The Union has called on both countries to adhere to international non-proliferation regimes, in particular by signing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as it stands. The Union strongly urges India and Pakistan to refrain from nuclear tests and from the development or deployment of nuclear weapons and nuclear-capable missiles. Likewise, we call on both countries to engage in a substantive dialogue with each other and to agree on confidence-building measures.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We are committed to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and welcome the recent ratifications by several countries. We call upon all States which have not yet done so to accede to it, without any change. The conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will constitute a significant contribution to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We warmly welcome the fact that all impediments to starting such negotiations finally have been overcome, and we are looking forward to contributing to the substantive negotiations. We continue to believe that the systematic and progressive efforts by nuclear-weapon States to reduce nuclear weapons need to be intensified and pursued with determination.

Biological weapons pose grave dangers. It is shocking that they can also be produced by non-State actors. Therefore, the European Union gives priority to strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We strive for the successful conclusion of the negotiations on a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime in 1999. I would also like to underline our commitment to the universality and the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, a landmark in the disarmament process.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to the goal of totally eliminating anti-personnel landmines worldwide and welcomes the opening for signature of the Ottawa Convention. We are pleased that the number of signatories and ratifications is rising steadily and that the Convention will enter into force on 1 March 1999. The fact that the required number of 40 ratifications was reached so quickly underlines the importance that the international community attaches to this endeavour. The European Union, being the major donor to anti-mine activities, is contributing significantly to solving the problems caused by those weapons.

A serious challenge to the international community is raised by the combination of internal conflicts and the proliferation of small arms. This issue requires a multi-pronged response. The Union, for its part, has adopted a code of conduct on arms exports and has thereby set high common standards. Moreover, we are currently engaged in the implementation of the European Union programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. Under this programme, we will assist third countries in preventing and combating

illicit trafficking in arms, and we will also assist affected countries.

As we approach the new millennium, nearly a quarter of the world's people — foremost among them women and children — continue to live in absolute poverty, while almost a third more are very poor. While the blight of poverty thus continues to challenge the international community, recent decades have also shown that progress in the reduction of poverty is possible. The goal of poverty eradication, through sustained growth and economic and social development, must be placed at the centre of international development cooperation.

Poverty has many dimensions and needs to be tackled in a gender-sensitive and comprehensive way within the context of sustainable development, based on the interdependence and mutually reinforcing nature of economic development, social development and environmental protection. The European Union therefore attaches great importance to an integrated and coordinated follow-up to global conferences. While the first responsibility lies with Governments, the United Nations system, as the global framework for international cooperation, has a key role to play in supporting and coordinating national efforts.

A new global partnership between developing countries, developed countries, multilateral institutions and civil society, with emphasis put on local ownership and complementarity of efforts, must be forged in order to achieve people-centred sustainable development. The strong commitment of the Union to such a global partnership is based on its unique position as the world's largest provider of development assistance.

Among the various frameworks, the present Lomé Convention, which will expire in February 2000, remains essential. During the upcoming negotiations on a successor, the European Union will aim at strengthening its partnership with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Building on the experience gained so far, the aim is to develop a modern and efficient framework for cooperation in order to keep the relationship between the Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries strong and prominent in the twenty-first century. I am convinced that cooperation in the context of the Lomé Convention will make an effective contribution to eradicating poverty and integrating the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries into our worldwide economic system.

We are committed to sustainable development as the overarching principle of national policy and international cooperation in our policies. Recognizing the central role of a healthy environment in quality of life, the European Union attaches great importance to reform of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT). We would welcome more coordination, focus and efficiency in these areas. The Kyoto Protocol, in which the member States of the European Union committed themselves to a reduction of 8 per cent in greenhouse gases, constitutes an important step towards sustainable development. As developed countries, we are prepared to take the lead in combating climate change. The European Community and its member States are determined to translate the commitments made at Kyoto into concrete actions and achievements.

In the context of sustainable development, population issues are of particular concern. They directly relate to human health and the quality of life. Over the coming decades, population size and age structure will be important factors interacting with economic development and the environment in all parts of the world. It is therefore very timely that a special session of the General Assembly will be convened next year to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994.

The fight against drugs is a major priority in the policy of the European Union. The recent special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem was an important step in the international effort to counter the global scourge of drug abuse. I should like to pay tribute to the Executive Director of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), Pino Arlacchi, and all others involved, for the excellent preparation of the session. Political leaders unanimously endorsed a series of important documents, including a Political Declaration, several action plans, time-frames and a number of concrete measures.

We welcome the balanced, integrated and gender-sensitive anti-drug strategy adopted by the special session. Our new commitments embrace efforts on both the supply and the demand side, constituting equal parameters of the drug-control equation. In particular, we look forward to the elaboration of an operational action programme on demand reduction. We from the European Union fully support an effective and rapid follow-up and implementation programme of the outcome of the special session.

In the light of the important new and extensive mandates in the field of international drug control, the donor base of UNDCP must be broadened. The European Union will continue to support the valuable work of UNDCP, the international lead agency in the follow-up to the special session.

The fight against organized crime — and the work of the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention — is of foremost importance. In this context we welcome closer cooperation between UNDCP and the Crime Prevention Centre in order to enhance the synergy of these programmes. The danger which transnational organized crime poses to the world community by creeping into many aspects of our societies must be met by effective international measures. Therefore, we support the elaboration of a convention against transnational organized crime and are pleased about the constructive and productive spirit of the preparatory meeting in Buenos Aires.

The horrible bomb attacks in Africa and Northern Ireland have brought terrorism back to the forefront of international concern. The General Assembly, setting norms and standards for the fight against terrorism, has passed a number of resolutions and adopted no fewer than 11 anti-terrorism conventions. The Sixth Committee is currently negotiating a convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. Its early finalization would signal the determination of the international community to relentlessly pursue terrorists. Only through concerted action can we win the battle against terrorists. The more countries join in this effort, the fewer the safe havens where terrorists can run or hide.

The successful completion of the Conference for the establishment of an International Criminal Court is an achievement of historic dimensions. The European Union fully endorses the outcome of the Rome Conference and the Statute, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of participating States. This Statute lays the foundation for an effective and credible Court as an institution to fight impunity for the most heinous crimes and to deter, once and for all, their commission, thereby contributing to the global advancement of peace and democracy. This session of the General Assembly must adopt the appropriate decisions to make the Court a reality. The European Union stands ready to do its utmost to contribute to the accomplishment of these tasks.

As in the past, the European Union describes its relations with third countries, and its position on areas of conflict throughout the world, in a memorandum that is circulated as an integral part of this address. The memorandum is a useful compendium of the common foreign and security policy of the Union and of relevant Community policies. I will highlight just a few positions.

We are extremely concerned at the dramatic escalation of tension in Kosovo. Hundreds of people have been killed, more than 250,000 refugees have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed clashes, and the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe is becoming ever more real. The primary responsibility for the devastating situation rests with the Serb and Yugoslav authorities, since their police and military operations have led to consequences for the civilian population that are out of any justifiable proportion. Therefore, it is up to President Slobodan Milosevic to order a halt to all repressive actions against the civilian population in Kosovo. At the same time, the Union expects that all parties concerned reject all forms of violence.

The Union, together with humanitarian organizations, has started a series of projects in order to create favourable conditions for a return process for refugees before the winter comes. A complete cessation of armed activities and a progressive withdrawal of Serb forces is needed now to make people confident enough to return to their homes. The European Union urges the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia authorities to allow unimpeded access to all areas of Kosovo for humanitarian organizations and observers and international forensic experts.

Negotiations between both sides, with international involvement, should take place as soon as possible to agree upon confidence-building measures and to define a new status for Kosovo. However, without a cessation of the ongoing Serb offensive, an end to further bloodshed and a significant improvement of the catastrophic humanitarian situation, a meaningful dialogue cannot be started. The European Union hopes that progress towards democracy, which is a prerequisite for the resolution of the conflict, can be achieved in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The final objective of the reform process should be the full integration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into the international community.

The Union remains fully committed to the implementation of the Dayton Accords, to political and economic stabilization, the return of refugees and the strengthening of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The past year has seen substantial progress due to strong pressure by the international community. We hope that the recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina will

contribute to the reconciliation of the ethnic communities and to the construction of a new civil society.

With regard to Albania, the European Union is seriously concerned at the recent outbreak of violence following the assassination of a leading politician of an opposition party. The European Union calls on all Albanian political parties to adopt a constructive attitude to solving the crisis by peaceful means through political consultations. It urges the parties to renounce any strategy of confrontation and to avoid fighting and violent demonstrations. Further violence will make national reconciliation even more difficult.

We sincerely hope that the instability still widespread in Albania will soon be overcome, in particular by overcoming the current political difficulties caused by hatred, mutual mistrust and various actions by both the Government and the main opposition party. The Union reminds all political factions of their obligation not to deepen the political divide, but rather to develop a spirit of cooperation.

The Union will continue its assistance according to progress made in the political dialogue as well as in the stabilization of institutions, especially in the field of police action.

The European Union stresses once again that the status quo in Cyprus is not acceptable. It reaffirms its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative aimed at a negotiated and lasting solution to the Cyprus question, respecting the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the country in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, with the goal of a bizonal, bicommunal federation on Cyprus.

The Union started accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus on 31 March of this year. The accession process and progress towards a political solution should reinforce one another. Accession to the Union should benefit all communities and help to bring about peace and reconciliation on the island.

In this context, we welcome the appointment of the new United Nations Deputy Special Representative, Dame Ann Hercus.

The European Union remains deeply concerned at the continuing standstill in the Middle East peace process, which constitutes a threat to the stability of the region. The Union considers the Middle East peace process to be the only path to security and peace for Israel, the Palestinians and the neighbouring States. A just and durable solution is in the fundamental interest of the European Union.

Our approach was reaffirmed at the meeting of the European Council held in Cardiff in June 1998. We contribute actively to efforts to promote the peace process, providing not only substantial economic support but also adding our political weight to the search for a solution. It is of the utmost importance to restore trust and confidence between the parties. The pillars of a solution continue to be in the principles agreed at Madrid and Oslo, especially land for peace, the full implementation of existing commitments of the Israeli/Palestinian Interim Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We call on Israel to recognize the right of the Palestinians to self-determination without excluding the option of a state of their own. On the other side, we call upon the Palestinians to reaffirm their commitment to Israel's right to live within recognized and safe borders. We also reiterate our opposition to Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories and to other unilateral measures, such as the changing of the status of Jerusalem. More than any other issues, such acts, as well as the continued expansion of settlements, undermine the Palestinians' confidence in the peace process.

The European Union will continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people. The positive development of the Palestinian economy is a precondition for political stability.

We want to express our concern at the lack of progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and we underline the need for a continuing effort in order to achieve a solution.

The Union supports the efforts of the United States to relaunch the negotiations. We consider that every avenue should be explored in order to restore a spirit of mutual trust and constructive negotiations. In this respect, we think that the recent proposals put forward by France and Egypt, as well as by our European Union Special Envoy, should be studied positively.

Africa, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, stands at the crossroads once more. In his landmark report (A/52/871) entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", Secretary-General Kofi Annan provided us with a clear analysis and a framework for a

comprehensive policy. The European Union is deeply concerned about the terrible toll that recent and current conflicts have taken, especially on innocent civilians. In spite of important regional and subregional efforts, the instability appears to be spreading, and creating a downward spiral that simply has to be stopped. I therefore urge the international community to continue to complement African efforts to solve their problems, as it has done by establishing the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). The Union would welcome further development of regional and subregional cooperation and integration among African countries. We hope that the summit between the European Union and the Southern African Development Community in Vienna in November will make an important contribution.

The Secretary-General's report rightly focuses on the importance of creating an environment in which durable peace is sustained and economic growth promoted. Recognizing that peace and security are indispensable preconditions, we emphasize the need for good governance, including respect for human rights and the rule of law. These values are essential pillars of the European Union's development policy, which over several decades has been centred on a genuine partnership with Africa.

The European Union is particularly concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider dangers for the region as a whole from the escalation of the conflict. In this respect, we hope that the European Union Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Aldo Ajello, will continue to work together with the representatives of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We urge all the parties involved in the conflict of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respect human rights and humanitarian law and to abstain from acts of violence against civilians. We welcome African initiatives to find a peaceful solution to this conflict, which can be solved only through a negotiated settlement acceptable to all Congolese. This would allow the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries of the region to find the peace and stability that are prerequisites for their development. The Union remains ready to help this political dialogue and to support any negotiation scheme obtaining the consent of all parties involved, *inter alia*, through the assistance of our Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region. A regional conference could be useful at a later stage to consider the relevant aspects and to strengthen regional cooperation.

We are determined to play an effective role in efforts to stop the fighting and restore peace, stability and respect for human rights in Afghanistan. We are committed to bringing about a sustainable peace in Afghanistan, putting an end to foreign intervention, and encouraging intra-Afghan dialogue, in particular through support for the central role of the United Nations. The European Union attaches special importance to the fight against illegal drugs and terrorism in Afghanistan.

We remain gravely concerned at the persistent human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law in Afghanistan. We denounce the continuing discrimination against girls and women in that country. We strongly urge all factions, and in particular the Taliban, to recognize, protect and promote human rights. And we strongly urge them to end discriminatory policies and to recognize, protect and promote equal rights and dignity for men and women.

Non-governmental organizations will be able to return to Kabul only when the authorities in Afghanistan have met the necessary conditions.

We reiterate our strong concern for the security of United Nations personnel, other related personnel and personnel of non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan, and we recall the responsibility of all factions to ensure safety, security and freedom of movement. We condemn the recent attack against two staff members of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) and the killing of Iranian diplomats in northern Afghanistan, and we demand an urgent investigation into these atrocious acts. We call on the Taliban to cooperate fully in ensuring the safe release of the remaining diplomats and other Iranian nationals missing in Afghanistan.

We have been deeply involved in the electoral process in Cambodia, especially in voter registration and poll observation, dispatching some 200 election observers who cooperated exceptionally well with the United Nations and other observer groups in the Joint International Observer Group.

We call upon all political forces in Cambodia to seize this opportunity to work together, to the fullest extent possible, towards national reconciliation, and express the hope that, with the elections, the foundation for the future well-being and prosperity of the people of Cambodia has been laid. Return to political normalcy will encourage the Union to consider new assistance programmes to help Cambodia in its economic recovery.

The Union notes with satisfaction the results achieved at the August meeting in New York, under the auspices of Mr. Kofi Annan, between the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal on the question of East Timor. We commend the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative for their efforts in this regard.

We welcome the Ministers' agreement to enter into in-depth negotiations on issues related to the question of East Timor, addressed in the final communiqué of the meeting, without prejudice to their basic positions of principle. We hope that these negotiations will lead to a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution in the near future, respecting the rights and legitimate aspirations of the people, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We welcome the prospect of the closer involvement of the East Timorese in the search for a solution.

I am deeply concerned at the continuing violations of human rights and lack of progress towards democracy in Burma/Myanmar. We strongly deplore the repressive actions of the Burmese authorities, including the arrest of several hundred members of the opposition. We call upon the State Peace and Development Council once again to bring human rights violations to an end and to enter into a substantive dialogue with opposition leaders, especially and including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and representatives of ethnic minorities, in order to establish democratic rule in accordance with the will of the people as expressed in democratic elections held in 1990. The Union seeks to cooperate closely with other countries, in particular in the region, to resolve the worrying situation in the country.

Although the challenges of the twenty-first century will be different from those we have been used to dealing with in past decades, we are convinced that the United Nations will become more indispensable than ever as the forum for global cooperation. What we have to do now is to make our world Organization fit for the next century. The Secretary-General's reform programme is excellent.

The reform of our world Organization is in the interest of all Member States. Of course, reform is not a cost-cutting exercise alone, but an ongoing process which will ultimately lead to a substantial improvement of the work done in the United Nations family. This process will help the Organization to better focus on the fulfilment of mandates and on the improvement of programme delivery. Consequently, the European Union will continue vigorously to support reform based on the proposals of the Secretary-General and the decisions of the General Assembly.

As far as the organization and methods of work of intergovernmental bodies are concerned, and especially of the General Assembly, we attach particular importance to the implementation of the reforms already agreed upon. We would welcome further improvements, particularly the streamlining of agendas, the reduction of duplication and better coordination between bodies dealing with similar issues.

The European Union firmly believes that the General Assembly should concentrate on implementing the significant agreements reached in some working groups of the General Assembly and at the major United Nations conferences. Carefully wrought compromises that allowed adoption by consensus were the result of a great amount of time and energy invested by all Member States.

The European Union is firmly committed to finding solutions to the United Nations financial crisis. Continuing high levels of unpaid assessments are undermining the financial stability and liquidity, and therefore the purpose and goal, of the United Nations. This places a heavy and unfair burden upon troop-contributing countries. The member States of the European Union have consistently honoured their financial obligations towards the United Nations. They pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions. A sound financial basis requires that all Member States fulfil their Charter obligations. The United States cannot be exempt from such obligations.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United States has a special responsibility towards the United Nations. We express our sincere hope that Washington will soon settle its arrears and live up to the legitimate expectations of Member States of the United States' role in the world Organization.

The European Union has grown from 100 million people to 400 million today. With only 8 per cent of the world population, the Union provides for 60 per cent of development and 50 per cent of humanitarian assistance. Eighty per cent of international aid to Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union, and 50 per cent of the assistance to the Palestinian territories are paid by the European Union. Forty per cent of the reconstruction help to Bosnia and Herzegovina come from the member States of the European Union. We are the strongest supporter of the United Nations. Our contributions account for 36 per cent of the regular budget and 39 per cent of the peacekeeping budget. The Union is ready to

use its political weight for the benefit of the entire international community, in particular developing countries.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the European Union's deep commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We will continue to support strongly the United Nations and the Secretary-General in carrying out the key objectives: the maintenance of international peace and security, economic and social progress, and the promotion of human rights and democratic freedoms.

The message of the European Union to the United Nations is clear. At the threshold of the new millennium, we face common threats and challenges. We must join forces to harness the benefits and diminish the risks of globalization. We must form a global alliance for human security. Global cooperation, as understood by the European Union, means human solidarity to ensure the survival of our planet and safeguard the future of coming generations.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Vice Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency Mr. Klaus Kinkel.

Mr. Kinkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. I wish you good fortune and all of us a successful session.

I should also like to thank Ambassador Udovenko for the dedicated way he conducted the business of the fifty-second session. He advanced the reform process at the United Nations and kept it on the agenda. We can and must follow up these efforts.

This session of the General Assembly has a special significance for my country. It was 25 years ago, almost to the day, on 19 September 1973, that Walter Scheel became the first Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany to address the United Nations. When he described our perception of the United Nations, he said that it meant more than the mere security of States, more than the mere regulation of their diplomatic relations. He said that what it is all about is the beginning and the objective of any rational policy — people.

That description of our role in the United Nations remains valid. United Germany too feels committed to a world free from fear and want, protected by the rule of law, a world in which every individual has his opportunity and which preserves the integrity of Creation for future generations. It is the vision enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights.

We have come a lot closer to that vision over the past 25 years. The division of Germany, Europe and the world has been healed. The world is developing ever more into the "one world" on the foundations of democracy and human rights. But it is also becoming increasingly clear that the human race has never been so bound up together in its common destiny, united by common challenges, as it is today.

The crises in Russia and Asia have shaken the world economy. The global scourges of drugs, organized crime and terrorism spread their tentacles around the globe. The year 1998 is the year of climate disasters. Two thirds of Bangladesh is under water and the Yangtze floods in China have claimed thousands of lives.

No State, whether super-Power or small island State, can master these global challenges alone. And no one can escape them, least of all the suffering people: the homeless in Bangladesh, the drug addict in Europe, the victim of civil war in Africa.

We can shape our future only through joint efforts. We therefore need global action and global management for the global challenges of the twenty-first century; not tomorrow or the day after, but today.

This is a test not only for Governments but also for the other global players: the non-governmental organizations and the multinational corporations. Never were the non-governmental organizations so important as they are today. Without them the Ottawa Convention banning landmines could not have been signed in December 1997. And, let us not forget, 51 of the world's hundred largest economic entities are now companies, and only 49 of them States. All this shows that the time has come for new alliances for peace, freedom and prosperity throughout the world.

The age of globalization is the age of the United Nations. Only here do all nations of the world come together. Only here can we find joint solutions to the global challenges of today and tomorrow. This is why we Germans want to help get the United Nations in shape for the twenty-first century. We are facing up to this responsibility — as the second largest export nation and the third largest economy in the world, and as the country with the largest population in the European Union.

We owe Secretary-General Kofi Annan our gratitude and support for his reform proposals. Now it is up to the Member States. The Security Council still mirrors the world as it was at the end of the Second World War, but not the enhanced status of Asia, Africa and Latin America with the Caribbean.

The same is true of the greater weight of Japan and united Germany. I wish to thank all Member States that advocate a permanent seat for Germany on the Security Council. Security Council reform cannot be delayed any longer; otherwise, the momentum will be lost and that would be bad indeed.

Since the ending of the cold war the United Nations has had more burdens to shoulder than ever. It therefore needs effective institutions, and for this reason it has a right to expect members to pay their dues on time. All, and especially the big members, must help according to their ability to ensure that the world Organization can accomplish its tasks. Germany, the third largest contributor, will continue to meet its obligations.

We know from recent experience that we should not add to but rather ease the burden of the United Nations. This is a task especially for regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). If they succeed in settling conflicts locally, the Security Council will not need to deal with them. I think that would be very well-advised, because it would free capacities for all of us.

New avenues of joint action are therefore called for. To pretend globalization is not happening would be absurd. Only those who face up to the challenge can exploit the opportunities and cushion the risks.

The impact of the crises in Russia and Asia shows that the world economy needs a reliable framework. That is not to say we need a global financial authority or fixed exchange rates, least of all a new wave of protectionism. But we do need better early-warning mechanisms, more transparency and more efficient banking systems, especially in the newly emerging economies.

This is not a task for Governments alone. What is needed now is a global public-private partnership between Governments, international financial organizations and corporations. We therefore support the American initiative for a dialogue between the G-8 and the newly emerging economies on a new international financial architecture. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank should not always have to serve as the stopgap when the opportunity for structural reforms has been missed.

Managing globalization also means weaving a network of partnerships between the big regional groupings and the big countries. The regional groupings are the components of a new global order under the roof of the United Nations. The European Union's partnerships with regional organizations like the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) prove we are on the right course: We want an open, not a confrontational, kind of regionalism.

I am confident that the European Union will be an anchor of stability in the twenty-first century. By introducing a single currency on 1 January 1999, it is focusing its energies. Its global role will increase. It is about to begin further negotiations on accession with associated partners. What Willy Brandt said about Germany in 1989 applies today to the whole of Europe:

"What belongs together is now growing together".

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) too is also gradually opening its doors to the new democracies. In the year of its fiftieth anniversary it will admit Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Together with Russia, Ukraine and the other Commonwealth of Independent States members, we are developing a comprehensive security partnership.

True, the Russians are having a rough time at present, but the world needs a democratic and stable Russia, a Russia which will play the role commensurate with its size, its status and its potential. Russia faces a Herculean task of consolidating the economy and maintaining social stability. All those responsible must face up to the challenge: the President, the Government, the parties and business. Of course, the regions too are called upon.

I know from my talks with Prime Minister Primakov last week in Moscow that Russia intends neither to change course nor to go into reverse. The crisis in Russia affects us all. We will not abandon Russia. It can count on us.

The Kosovo conflict remains a thorn in Europe's side. A humanitarian disaster in the true sense of the word is looming. The situation of the refugees, more

than 250,000 of them, is desperate. International organizations, the European Union, the United States and Russia are coordinating their efforts to enable those who have been driven out to return to their villages.

Time is getting short; winter is just around the corner. Most of the responsibility for this drama lies with Belgrade, with President Milosevic. He must realize that the international community will react with military force if necessary. We still seek a political solution for Kosovo — self-administration within the Yugoslav Federation. However, this cannot be achieved without Belgrade and Pristina. So the weapons must now be silenced. We condemn the use of force by the Yugoslav security forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army. The recent reports we have received from Kosovo are very disappointing, troubling and worrisome. I hope they are not true.

NATO is prepared to provide the backing for a political solution. Yugoslavia and Kosovo are a part of Europe. Their future can only be a European one. The history of Europe in this century shows that we can overcome hatred and mistrust. But we have to have the willingness to do so.

In Bosnia, too, we have seen animosity slowly being replaced by trust and cooperation. Recently I paid my twelfth visit to Sarajevo. That tormented city is slowly beginning to blossom again, and the country's reconstruction is progressing.

Nonetheless, the peace process must continue to be buttressed by NATO and the Stabilization Force (SFOR), for the process is not self-sustaining. Regardless of the result of the elections, the international community will not tolerate any reversal of the implementation of the peace agreement. Furthermore, genuine peace will not return until the presumed war criminals and enemies of peace — Mr. Karadzic and his lot — have been brought to trial in The Hague.

Only when those guilty of crimes against humanity, torturers and terrorists all over the world, have been brought to justice will we all be able to sleep peacefully.

Thus, the establishment of the International Criminal Court on 17 July as a major step towards a world order in which the force of law, not the law of force, prevails. Germany was the driving force. I appeal to all countries to sign and ratify the Court's Statute.

No one stands more at the mercy of those who wield power than refugees. At present more than 20 million people worldwide are in flight: despairing elderly people, women, children; people who are sick, homeless and destitute and have absolutely no idea what is going to happen to them.

Over the last several years I have been to many refugee camps, in Albania, Africa and the Middle East. Every refugee's case is a story of immeasurable human suffering.

Germany is now the country with the second largest number of refugees. From Kosovo alone, 150,000 refugees have found refuge in Germany.

The suffering of the refugees is a humanitarian and political challenge to the international community as a whole. What is now needed, therefore, is a global refugee policy. The United Nations, too, has to do something about it.

Specifically, this means, first, a more equitable distribution of the refugees, as I recommended here in the General Assembly in 1993. We cannot leave the poorest countries to their own devices in trying to cope with the refugee problem.

Secondly, greater efforts will have to be made to remove the causes of flight and expulsion.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has declared the twenty-first century a century of prevention, and with good reason. To wait until a situation gets so bad that people have to take flight is to make oneself partly responsible. Trouble must therefore be nipped in the bud. This is the task of preventive diplomacy, of human rights observers and peacekeeping forces.

Striking at the root of mass flight and migration also means eliminating the economic, ecological and social causes. The gap between rich and poor grows wider. The wealthiest 20 per cent of the world population consume 86 per cent of all goods, the poorest 20 per cent only 1.3 per cent.

This equity gap must be closed. Every individual has a right to live in dignity, free from hunger and want.

All nations must be given a fair chance in global competition, the poorest ones in particular. Hence, it is up to the rich countries to help the poor make the most of their opportunities for development.

Our aim is a social world market economy. This is why in 1997 Germany spent 10.25 billion deutsche marks on bilateral and multilateral assistance measures — an investment in peace and stability.

Africa shows what can be achieved when the international community and the countries concerned pull together. Today, democratic elections are held in more than half of the African countries. In 20 African countries economic growth is between 4 and 6 per cent, and in 11 it is higher still.

We want the Africans to know that we will not abandon that vast continent and its 800 million people, despite the heavy burdens it still has to bear.

Poverty and refugee problems are also exacerbating the situation in the Middle East. The people in Israel and in the Palestinian territories long for peace more than anything else on earth. The peace process requires fresh impetus.

The Israelis and Palestinians must move towards each other again and rediscover the lost mutual trust.

We Europeans will continue to support this process with our American friends. We back Israel's legitimate claim to security for its State and citizens.

The Palestinians have recognized that claim; now words must be followed by deeds. They must see to it that terrorism has no chance.

But Israel, too, must show compromise as regards a further partial withdrawal. Neither side should put any new obstacles in the way of a deal — and that includes allowing new settlements in the occupied territories.

Particularly in the Middle East, we have time and again seen that terrorism leads to a dead end, destruction and suffering. We must pit all our strength against the cynics who advocate violence, the fanatics and ideologues; the dead of Omagh, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam serve as a warning. Those who plant bombs and murder people must be brought to justice.

Drying up the sources of terrorism — poverty, ethnic conflict and fundamentalism — is our common responsibility. But to fight terrorism is not to fight Islam. Islam is one of the great world religions. Nothing could be further from the truth than the cliché that Islam is synonymous with fundamentalism and violations of human rights.

We want a dialogue of cultures and religions, especially with Islam. There exists an ethic of humanity that unites us all. This ethic is based on the inalienable dignity of every individual, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the human rights covenants of the United Nations. These are the benchmarks for our joint action in the twenty-first century.

Violations of human rights are no longer an internal matter of States. They concern us all. Any group which, like the regime in Kabul, denies women their basic human rights places itself outside the international community of common values.

The world of tomorrow will be judged by how we treat our children today. They are our most valuable asset. Yet the rights of many children are still being trampled underfoot. Millions of children have no chance to live a life in dignity. Millions of children are forced to work.

Particularly appalling is the fact that every year some two million children all over the world are sexually abused. Only through joint action can we stop child prostitution, traffic in children and child pornography, including that proliferated via the Internet. I therefore propose that the United Nations set up a contact point to coordinate worldwide efforts to eradicate sexual abuse of children. The optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child designed to afford better protection against sexual exploitation should be quickly adopted and quickly put into effect.

Children are small people who need big rights. Protection for children during armed conflicts must be improved, including by outlawing their use as soldiers.

We all hoped that with the ending of the East-West confrontation the danger of a nuclear conflagration would be gone forever. This has proved to be an illusion. The threat of proliferation of means of mass destruction hovers over the human race. We can safeguard world peace in the twenty-first century only if we keep such terrible weapons under control.

In Geneva, India and Pakistan have agreed to negotiations on a cut-off. That's a good sign, but not nearly enough. It must be followed by their accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. And all nations should now sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This also applies to the conventions banning

chemical and biological weapons. The adoption of a verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention is now urgent.

Next March the Ottawa Convention imposing a worldwide ban on anti-personnel landmines enters into force — a great success. Only if all countries now sign the Convention will these diabolical devices soon be wiped from the face of the earth. It is our common task to get rid of the 100 million mines still remaining, using state-of-the-art technology.

We must also radically rethink our attitude to nature. The victims of the floods in China and Bangladesh are a warning. We must swing the wheel round now. This we owe to our children and grandchildren. We can save our blue planet and its ecosystem together or not at all.

Take the world climate. The Kyoto Protocol launched a global effort to protect it. That was a big step forward. But time is getting short. We have just had the warmest half year this century. At the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled for Buenos Aires in November, we shall have to agree on the instruments with which to achieve the objectives of Kyoto.

Take water. Water is irreplaceable. Water is more important than oil. Yet in more than 80 countries it is in short supply. Two billion people have insufficient access or none at all to clean drinking water. Finding joint solutions for the peaceful use and conservation of water, the source of life, is one of the great tasks of the twenty-first century. The pursuit of this scarce commodity must not be allowed to spark fresh conflicts.

Germany intends to remain in the vanguard of the international campaign to protect the environment. I am gratified to note that our commitment has been acknowledged by the appointment of Klaus Töpfer as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

But we are not going to rest on our laurels. A few days ago I opened an international conference in Potsdam on early-warning mechanisms for natural disasters. The conference has shown that progress can be achieved if we want it. Specifically, it is now a question of establishing effective global early-warning systems for environmental crises and natural disasters, and developing emergency management arrangements for the coordination of international relief measures. We must now get down to this task, and the United Nations is the right place to do so.

Four hundred and sixty three days from now the twentieth century comes to an end — a century of unprecedented violence and destruction. The coming century must be a century with a humane countenance. What a wonderful vision. But talking about it is not enough. Only if we act together will we survive together.

The United Nations is indispensable to this task. Strengthening it to secure a peaceful and more equitable world — that is our responsibility. This we owe to coming generations. My country will devote every possible effort to this task.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: Mankind is increasingly feeling the winds of the twenty-first century. What they bring depends on all of us, on whether or not we succeed in responding collectively to new challenges and in establishing a reliable system of international security and stability once we have overcome the vices, antagonisms and stereotypes accumulated during the century about to end.

This is not only possible, it is the imperative of our times!

A well-known Russian proverb says, "If you would live in the world, live in peace". It contains a highly philosophical message of everlasting value. Mankind will live in peace and harmony once it has learned to resolve emerging problems through peaceful, political means. States will live in peace and harmony once they have recognized their interrelationship and interdependence and started to seek collective responses to the challenges of their times.

Experience confirms the truth of this popular wisdom. The most recent example is the sharp aggravation of the world monetary and financial crisis which has besieged many countries, including Russia, which is undergoing sweeping economic reforms. The current upheaval in the world financial markets can be overcome only by joint efforts that do not pursue unilateral advantages and are intended to ensure global economic stability. Interaction of States in this process, including within the framework of the United Nations, must, on principle, be raised to a new level.

As for Russia, after overcoming an acute political crisis, the country's President, Boris N. Yeltsin, the Government and the leading political forces are making vigorous efforts to stabilize the economic and financial situation. This is not an easy task, but the solution will be found.

From this rostrum I pledge that Russia will not deviate from the path of reform and will do its best to pass with dignity this most difficult test, so as not only to preserve the democratic progress that has been made but also to augment it.

Likewise, Russia's foreign policy will remain consistent and constructive. It is firmly geared towards building a democratic multipolar world, ensuring interaction with other States in the interests of settling international problems by political means and developing broad, mutually beneficial cooperation in all areas.

We are convinced that the problems before the world, no matter how complex they may be, can be solved on the basis of strict observance of international law and close interaction among States. Multilateral organizations and mechanisms have a special role to play in this respect. Above all, this applies to the United Nations, which continues to be the sole universal international peacekeeping organization and is thus better equipped than any other world body to reach agreements on how to settle conflicts, as well as to identify and remove the underlying social and economic causes. It is important for United Nations efforts to be reinforced by support from regional organizations.

We highly value the level of interaction that now exists between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), acting as a reliable partner in addressing complex European problems, as well as interaction with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional organizations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The international community has developed a unique arsenal of political and diplomatic tools intended for the resolution of every international problem. It must be put to effective use.

Coercive actions constitute exceptional methods of last resort. Their use must be strictly regulated by the rules of international law and above all by the United Nations Charter. In other words, we advocate invoking the force of law rather than the law of force in international affairs.

The fact that the Iraqi crisis which erupted earlier this year was settled precisely by political means, through the joint efforts of many States and the initiatives launched by the United Nations Secretary-General, provided graphic evidence that the potential inherent in constructive and active diplomacy is by far more efficient than relying exclusively on military force.

A new outbreak of tensions around Iraq has made us deeply concerned, since it is fraught with serious consequences for regional and international stability. No doubt Iraq must fully travel its part of the road, resume full cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and implement relevant Security Council resolutions. On the other hand, the Security Council must adequately assess the situation related to the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and answer the question of whether or not that country still poses a threat to regional and overall international security after seven years of work carried out there by United Nations inspectors. Concerted action by the world community is required today to finally unblock this crisis situation.

Political logic must prevail over the logic of force in our search for ways to settle the explosive conflict in Kosovo. The use of tools of coercion to resolve the Kosovo conflict might lead to a major war with unpredictable consequences for the Balkan region and Europe at large. It is our firm belief that a political solution is the only possible way of settling the problem of Kosovo, granting it broad autonomy and ensuring strict respect for the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The bloodshed in Afghanistan continues in spite of the fact that, as experience has shown, only temporary gains can be obtained in that country through the use of arms. Rather, it is only through a persistent search for political solutions, with the United Nations playing a central role, that genuine stabilization, real settlement, formation of an efficient central Government recognized by all Afghans and, finally, assurance of Afghanistan's territorial integrity and independence can realistically be accomplished.

Collective political efforts are required to give a second wind to the Middle East peace process. In our view, it is not so much the absence of fresh ideas or proposals but rather the upsetting of the balance that has stymied progress on all the negotiating tracks. It should not be ignored that even if the Middle East process has long-term objectives, it also has its time limits. Russia has consistently advocated the establishment of an independent Palestinian State through political means and

negotiations. It is only in this way that the inalienable rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and reliable assurance of Israel's legitimate security interests can be realized.

In a parallel move, talks must be resumed on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, building on the results already achieved.

The recently proposed settlement of the Lockerbie case has been a major accomplishment of the international community. The adoption by the Security Council of a relevant resolution was possible due to the constructive approach taken by the parties concerned — the United States, Great Britain, France and Libya — as well as due to diplomatic efforts by many international organizations, which were supported by Russia. It is essential to proceed without delay to its implementation.

Arguably, similar perseverance must be shown in the efforts to break the deadlock in the Cyprus settlement. The United Nations must play a leading role to this end.

Failure of the international community to fully extinguish any one of the long-standing local conflicts in Africa in recent years is a source of growing concern. Moreover, new flash points of tension have emerged on that continent. It must be admitted that so far attempts to achieve full coordination between the United Nations and Africa's regional organizations have not succeeded. That is why the upcoming Security Council ministerial meeting on Africa should focus on shaping a strong common stance capable of radically reversing the negative dynamics of Africa's latest developments.

For objective reasons, Russia has paid special attention to settlement of conflict situations in the CIS. Whether in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajikistan or Trans-Dniestria, our country has but one objective — namely, promoting a political settlement and helping build lasting peace. As requested by the sides concerned, Russia has undertaken a difficult peace-building mission and is doing all it can to bring it to fruition. But the effort can prove unavailing unless the parties in conflict show goodwill and a constructive attitude and also receive more meaningful international backing, above all from the United Nations and the OSCE.

While making strong efforts to settle regional crises, we should not lose sight of global problems, some of which have acquired a new dimension in the last year.

We cannot but feel concerned over the emergence of a real threat in the form of the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the planet. It is a common task of the international community to encourage all countries to accede both to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We welcome Brazil's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Russia is committed to the idea of continued reduction of nuclear weapon arsenals and the maintenance of strategic stability at lower armament levels. In this context, we attach particularly great importance to the Russian-American interaction in the area of reducing strategic offensive arms. In the course of his appointment hearings, Mr. Yevgeny M. Primakov, Chairman of the Russian Government, expressed his firm resolve a few days ago to seek early ratification by the State Duma of the START II Treaty. Likewise, it is important for the United States to ratify all documents related to START II.

Accession of the other nuclear Powers to the nuclear arms control process is now on the agenda. We urge careful consideration of a proposal made by President Boris Yeltsin that calls on the nuclear Powers to deploy nuclear weapons exclusively within the boundaries of their national territories. We note with satisfaction the recent consensus decision in the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations banning production of nuclear-weapon-grade fissionable materials. What is of special significance is that the decision was supported by States that are not yet parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, among others. We are convinced that such a ban would be a further necessary step in multilateral efforts to enhance the non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear threat has many faces. Today, nuclear terrorism can also be a source of that threat. What seemed to be science fiction yesterday can now, much to our regret, become a reality. Hence, strong action by the international community is required to prevent the real-life emergence of that new form of terrorism. Accelerating work on a draft convention to combat acts of nuclear terrorism, submitted by our country so that it can be adopted by the General Assembly at the current session, has become particularly relevant.

Russia has repeatedly stated at the highest level its firm opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. International terrorism is one of the most dangerous global challenges to international stability. It

can be successfully combated only through united action by all States. Indeed, only by acting together instead of making unilateral power moves, shall we be able to succeed in our fight against that most dangerous of evils.

Militant separatism has become another factor that destabilizes international relations. Relying exclusively on extremist methods in the struggle for the national rights of minority groups within multinational States, separatism often finds itself in league with terrorism and religious fanaticism. Separatism inevitably provokes internal conflicts in which neighbouring countries frequently get involved, thereby setting the stage for stoking regional crises.

More than two and a half thousand national minorities live in 150 countries of the world. Were all of them to aspire to a State entity of their own, the disastrous and catastrophic consequences could easily be imagined. Those who foment separatism should keep that in mind.

The fight against drugs also requires joint, concerted action. We must focus on the practical implementation of the relevant decisions aimed at combating the drug threat adopted by the General Assembly at its special session.

The international community should take a common stand in implementing the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary occurs this year. In this area, too, resolute joint action is needed in respect of those States which, under various pretexts, violate generally recognized human rights and freedoms. There can be no tolerance of double standards involving attempts to shield those who elevate to the level of Government policy discrimination against a part of the population. Russia cannot and will not remain indifferent to the fate of hundreds of thousands of Russian-speaking citizens subjected to harsh repressive measures in Latvia and Estonia. The international community, and above all the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, should closely watch the situation in those countries.

I have touched upon a few of the important issues which the United Nations is called upon to deal with at this time. It continues to play its unique role as facilitator of joint efforts by States to strengthen peace and security, deal with urgent issues and meet new global challenges. To that end, it is necessary to improve United Nations mechanisms and adapt them to today's needs. That is exactly what the process of reforming the United Nations, launched by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, seeks to accomplish. The rationale behind it is enhanced efficiency for the Organization.

That is the angle from which we approach the ongoing discussion on the work of the Security Council. No one should question the Security Council's primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of peace and security. It is extremely important to preserve its effectiveness and its efficiency in decision-making, as well as to build on internal cohesion and work coordination methods developed in recent years.

I should like to reaffirm that we support the implementation of reforms and changes in United Nations mechanisms that will promote effective consolidation of the United Nations and improve its activities. Among the steps taken to that end I wish to mention adoption, under United Nations auspices, of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. Russia's initiative to launch a discussion on ways to achieve international information security serves the same goal. In essence, our proposal is intended to offset threats inherent in the use of the latest advances in science and technology for purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international security.

I wish to single out a dangerous tendency: that of adapting the United Nations to meet the requirements of an individual State, or of replacing it altogether as, for example, in the case of peacekeeping. What I have in mind are attempts to undercut the powers of the Security Council, as laid down in the Charter, to use coercive measures. We must not allow a precedent to be created involving the use of military potential in a crisis situation without the consent of the Security Council. Surely it is obvious that such actions could lead to a serious erosion of the existing system of international relations, whose central element is the United Nations.

United Nations sanctions as an instrument of international coercion also require a highly balanced approach. When introduced by the Security Council, sanctions should not become a tool to fight a regime that may be disliked. Sanctions should not make people suffer. They should not destabilize the economic situation in the country subjected to sanctions or in the adjacent region. It is time to fine-tune the mechanism regulating the imposition of sanctions and their duration and the procedures for easing and lifting them.

In short, individual elements of the United Nations mechanism need improvement and retooling. But we should go about it with a full sense of responsibility, mindful of the medical profession's rule that unnecessary harm is to be avoided at all costs.

Every session of the General Assembly is, in a way, a milestone event. Each session is expected to make a tangible contribution to the resolution of acute problems confronting mankind. It will depend on all of us whether or not the fifty-third session of the General Assembly lives up to the expectations and hopes we place in it. It will depend on all of us whether or not joint effective steps are taken to lead us to a more stable, peaceful world, a world free from war and conflict and from financial and economic upheaval, a world built on the principles of democracy and multi-polarity. Russia stands ready to work with others to attain these goals.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of Australia, Her Excellency Ms. Penelope Anne Wensley.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): On behalf of the Foreign Minister of Australia, Mr. Alexander Downer, who is unable to be here because of our national election next week, I would like to extend warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. Your country, Uruguay, has given consistent and strong support to the United Nations, and your own expertise and contribution to the development of international law in particular is widely recognized. We know that we are in good hands, just as we were last year with your predecessor, Hennadiy Udovenko. Like him, you may count on Australia's support as you carry out your responsibilities and work to guide us towards constructive and worthwhile outcomes.

As was very clear from the range of issues addressed on the first day and again this morning in the general debate, you take up the presidency, Sir, at a time when the agenda before the United Nations is more challenging than it has ever been Australia is very concerned about many of those challenges and issues. But today I want to focus particularly on the subject of non-proliferation and disarmament, where recent events have brought us to a crossroads in our attempts to steer the world away from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

Although we heard some pessimistic perspectives yesterday, in Australia's view the progress that the international community has made in the field of arms control and disarmament over recent decades has, in fact, been remarkable — a trend to which the end of the cold war lent added impetus. Many bilateral, regional and international agreements have been concluded, all making a contribution to making our world more secure. Those achievements were driven by the realization that we must work with determination towards a situation where the right to self-defence of all nations, which is, after all, enshrined in the United Nations Charter, must be ensured at the lowest possible level of conventional armament and without recourse at all to weapons of mass destruction. Events which have moved against the tide of this progress have been relatively rare, but when they have occurred they have stood in stark contrast to the preferred direction of the international community.

A survey of the progress made to date in the field of arms control and disarmament points to two key conclusions. The first is self-evident: there is more work to be done. The second is perhaps easier to overlook. In the face of periodic setbacks and challenges, it is vitally important, and in the security interests of all countries, that we stay the course on arms control and disarmament, that we not underestimate or take for granted the value of what has been achieved to date, and that we maintain the broad-based political commitment to the norms and institutions that we have put in place or have yet to build.

A stock-take of progress in arms control and disarmament over recent decades leaves no doubt about the positive direction in which the community is moving in building a global security architecture. In addition to agreements on conventional arms limitation and transparency measures, the balance sheet for weapons of mass destruction is particularly impressive.

A Treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction — the Chemical Weapons Convention — was successfully negotiated and has attracted widespread support, and efforts are under way to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

A milestone Treaty now exists — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — which bans all nuclear-weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions.

Long called-for by political leaders from across all regions, hard-negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament and finally adopted by the Assembly by an overwhelming majority two years ago, the CTBT has now attracted the adherence of over 150 States, and its institutional fabric is being steadily established.

The cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime — the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — has been extended indefinitely and has achieved near-universal membership, and agreement has been reached to commence negotiations to ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons.

In another area, under the strategic arms reductions process, or START, and consistent with article VI of the NPT, deep cuts have been made in the cold-war arsenals of the two largest possessors of nuclear weapons, bringing closer the day when plurilateral and multilateral phases of nuclear disarmament can realistically be envisaged.

With START I almost fully implemented, the United States and the Russian Federation, from which we have just heard, have more than halved their holdings of strategic nuclear warheads over the past decade. START III will bring those same arsenals down to some 80 per cent below cold-war peaks. It is clearly very important for START II to enter into force quickly so that planning for implementation can begin, ensuring there is no interruption to the nuclear disarmament process.

The international nuclear safeguards systems have also been strengthened, enhancing international confidence in the integrity of this regime and its ability to detect and deter non-compliance with non-proliferation obligations. And finally, a treaty banning landmines — what some have called weapons of mass destruction in slow motion — has been concluded.

On the other side of the ledger, the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes have had to withstand serious challenges from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and from Iraq, and the progress towards a universal no-nuclear-testing norm has been seriously jolted by sporadic outbreaks of testing, most recently by India and Pakistan. Unresolved regional tensions in South Asia and the Middle East continue to bedevil and to thwart the attainment of the goal of universal membership of the NPT. While being justifiably dismayed at the disdain of the few for the clearly expressed will of the international community, we can also draw encouragement from the strength of our national and collective responses to these challenges and the resilience of the regimes when so challenged.

It is vitally important that we stay the course, that we ensure that such events amount to no more than temporary deviations from the near-universally accepted norm against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that this is in Australia's national interest and in the interest of international and regional security to uphold the nuclear and other non-proliferation regimes and to continue to do our utmost to pursue effective measures to reduce and eliminate the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction.

In a strange way, the periodic setbacks to these efforts serve to underscore the value of the progress made to date. The very existence of the NPT, and its near-universal membership, highlights the unacceptability of embarking upon a nuclear-weapon programme in today's world. Similarly, it is the very existence of the CTBT, and the near-universal point of view it represents — namely, that nuclear testing should be a thing of the past — that rendered more powerful the widespread disapproval of the spate of nuclear tests earlier this year. The new ratifications which the CTBT attracted following the South Asian nuclear tests were eloquent testimony to the confidence of the international community in and its commitment to the no-testing norm.

Australia would like to take this public opportunity to congratulate Brazil and to welcome it as the most recent member of the family of NPT nations. We call on that handful of States remaining outside the NPT to reflect on the possibility that the 187 countries which have decided that the NPT provides greater security than the nuclear-weapons option might be right, and that they — the outsiders — might be wrong. Australia also calls on them to consider how much more seriously their national security interests would be degraded in a world where the overwhelming majority of States had not embraced the nuclear non-proliferation norm.

My country, as I think is well known, has long been a very firm supporter of universal adherence to treaties on international weapons of mass destruction. We have signed all 13 multilateral arms control and disarmament treaties and ratified all of these bar one; ratification of the Ottawa Convention on landmines, I am happy to say, is in progress. Only four other countries can match this record. We remain committed to making a difference where and when we can in building consensus on the way forward, and we will continue to be as diligent and as creative as possible across the full range of arms-control and disarmament issues.

Our focus, for those who know us well, is always on results rather than rhetoric and on making pragmatic contributions where we can, illustrated by the sort of contributions that we have made to helping to negotiate the key Conventions to which I have referred and by our support for building and strengthening the institutions which work in various ways to support international arms-control and disarmament goals — institutions such as the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the Association of South-East Asian Nations

(ASEAN) Regional Forum and the nuclear safeguards system.

Experience has shown that these regimes cannot be taken for granted. The existing regimes need continual care, maintenance and vigilance to ensure that they remain effective and that political and financial commitment to them remains strong.

In the NPT area, for example, further work is needed to maintain the strength of the Treaty and to go on to achieve its full implementation and universality. The sixth Review Conference, in the year 2000, following on the recent serious challenges to the non-proliferation norm, to which I have referred, will be one of the most significant in the history of the Treaty. But even if we have a distance to go in terms of the Treaty's value, surely no one would argue that the world would be a safer place without it. Nor could it be argued that the negotiation of the Treaty back in the late 1960s, and the maintenance and strengthening of the Treaty ever since, has not been worth the effort.

And to those few who persist with the tired refrain that the NPT is a discriminatory Treaty, we say "Yes, it is", and for one excellent reason: the NPT allows a temporary state of discrimination between the nuclear-weapon States and the rest of us because, quite simply, the alternative was, and still is, too horrible to contemplate. We might lament that because of the cold war the state of discrimination lasted far too long, but we surely cannot argue that the alternative scenario would have made the world a safer place than it is today. For it was a commonplace of political forecasts in the 1960s, when nuclear weapons were a legitimate security option for any State, that over 20 States, including my own, Australia, would likely choose to exercise that option.

And it is surely perverse, when the titanic arsenals of nuclear weapons accumulated during the cold war are at last being drastically cut, to act against the tide of disarmament by pursuing the nuclear option.

Similarly, no one could argue that we would be better off without a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Its conclusion, its signature by the five nuclear-weapon States and its ratification to date by two are major achievements — all the more reason to press ahead with the establishment of the Treaty's implementation and verification structures.

A strong start has been made in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its effectiveness is already amply demonstrated, but we need continued political will and financial commitment, as well as the additional ratifications and accessions, for the full security benefits of the Convention to be realized.

Similarly, the Biological Weapons Convention is weakened by its lack of verification and compliance provisions. Work is now under way in the Ad Hoc Group negotiations to rectify this deficiency. We strongly support this Ad Hoc Group and are working together with others to produce an effective and workable protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

One of the things that we have been doing — and people may have seen the reference to a meeting about this in today's *Journal* — has been to work collaboratively with many other countries to convene an informal meeting of Foreign Ministers. This informal meeting is going to be held tomorrow, here in New York, and it represents the determination of many countries, at high political levels, to work together to bring us closer to the goal of an early conclusion of an effective protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

In conjunction with the international community's efforts to achieve full implementation and universality of existing regimes, we also need new, reinforcing and complementary steps to achieve our overall arms control and disarmament goals.

Commencement of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty is an excellent example of how we should be moving forward in this respect. We see it as the next logical step after the CTBT, and it is one to which we hope the Assembly will lend unequivocal support and encouragement. The recent agreement in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to commence negotiations on a cut-off treaty demonstrates, we believe, the resilience of the non-proliferation regime under pressure. It gives the lie to those who recently pronounced it dead. It is a sign of the international community reaffirming its faith in the non-proliferation principle to which it has been committed for the past 30 years.

I want to refer very briefly to three more subjects: United Nations reform, human rights and peacekeeping.

Like most other Member States, we want this Organization to work better. Some progress has been made. We welcomed the agreement reached on key elements of the Secretary-General's reform package. Indeed, we worked hard and quietly to help bring this about. But it is now very important to ensure that what

has been agreed is effectively implemented — that the task force and the reviews of specific aspects of United Nations organizations all actually produce concrete outcomes and that real change does in fact occur.

Critical to the achievement of real reform will be the resolution of the ongoing problem of non-payment of arrears in financial contributions. The failure of many Member States, including the major contributor, to address this situation hinders all our efforts to strengthen this Organization.

Also, much of the reform process to us appears to have been focused on rationalizing and refining structures and mechanisms and on administrative measures. We think that the next phase of the reform process has to give much more structured thought — and I believe that this is what the Secretary-General has in mind in his presentations to date on the Millennium Assembly — to the kind of United Nations we expect and want in the decades to come. A thorough review of priorities is overdue. Although the lofty ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter remain as valid as ever, we need to give serious thought to modernizing the ways in which we give effect to those objectives in terms of operational activities.

Australia is concerned, like so many others who have spoken in the general debate to date, that the debate on Security Council reform has stalled. We have had an exhaustive — but, regrettably, inconclusive — discussion over the last year. It is time now to move beyond general discussion to serious negotiation of a reform package, one which will usher in a remodelled Council that is more representative, transparent and suited to the new millennium. This will require serious engagement and flexibility from all involved. My Government remains committed to finding ways to move the debate forward.

Those of you who were here at last year's session of the General Assembly may recall that Foreign Minister Downer raised the issue of electoral groups. We continue to assert that this is an important element in the reform debate. It is over 30 years since the last significant change was made to the regional groups. The drawbacks of the present configuration are becoming more and more obvious: substantial disparities in the size of the various groups and an inadequate level of representation available to many subregions, including Australia's own geographical area of East Asia and the Pacific. We have noted that there is gathering interest among Member States in this subject, and we think it is time that we recognized it as an element of reform which needs to be addressed. Changing the groups to reflect better contemporary realities and the interests of the current membership will, we recognize, require careful thought and patient discussion, and it is simply far too early to put forward any particular formula. But we suggest we could begin by discussing the principles on which a new system could be built and by exchanging views in a thoughtful and non-acrimonious way on how we might take the process forward.

The year 1998 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping. Australia's commitment to upholding the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains as strong now as it was in 1948, when the Declaration was proclaimed. Members may not know that Australia was one of the eight countries tasked with the drafting of the Declaration and that we also played an important role in ensuring that human rights provisions were included in the United Nations Charter. Fifty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represented a common statement of goals and aspirations, a vision of the world as the international community would want it to become.

We still believe in that vision and we see the fiftieth anniversary as a time for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to this powerful document. Similarly, the 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping gives us an opportunity to recognize how far the institution of peacekeeping has come, to take stock of the lessons we have learnt from the past and, perhaps most importantly, to pay tribute to over 1,500 peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for a safer and more peaceful world.

Whether we are talking of old problems or new ones, whether we are analysing setbacks or successes, or marking anniversaries, the annual stocktake which this general debate represents offers the opportunity not for a series of set speeches unrelated to each other and ticking off a lot of subjects, but rather a chance to remind ourselves of what the United Nations stands for, to recognize what has been achieved to date, and to recommit ourselves for the future to protecting and advancing those achievements.

I have focused today on disarmament not only as an area of the utmost priority for Australia and Australians, but also as one where we believe we can add value. But the parallels and lessons of disarmament and non-proliferation hold good for other areas of the United Nations activities.

I said at the very outset that the international community was at a crossroads in our attempts to build an international dispensation in which the threat of mass destruction had no place. The achievements of the last 30 years in setting in place treaties, institutions and norms to ensure that we move in that direction are impressive. But they are not invulnerable. Inadequate verification, non-compliance, aberrant behaviour, budget fatigue, reform fatigue failure of political will — all of these things have the potential to unravel and to undermine what we have built together. Effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation — like all the other subjects that are being addressed from this rostrum — require large investments of political and economic capital. It might be natural at times, particularly challenging and worrying times such as we are currently experiencing, to wonder if it is worth the cost. Brief consideration of the alternatives is surely enough to convince us that the answer is undoubtedly "yes".

To do otherwise would be to betray not only the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which we are commemorating, but also the very principles of the United Nations Charter.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Abdus Samad Azad.

Mr. Azad (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bengali; English text furnished by the delegation*): May I convey to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, our felicitations on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. With a person of your eminence and experience in the Chair, our session is assured of a successful outcome.

To your predecessor, Hennadiy Udovenko, I express our deep appreciation for a job well done. We truly had a reform Assembly. It was a matter of great satisfaction for Bangladesh to support his brilliant work on United Nations reform, especially through our role as the Chairman of the Administrative and Budgetary Committee. We are particularly grateful that, at the concluding meeting of the fifty-second session, he appealed to the international community for solidarity with the people of Bangladesh at a time when our country was inundated by the worst floods in our history.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In this year's unprecedented floods, two thirds of our country was completely inundated and nearly 31 million people were affected. Over 20 million were rendered homeless. Immense damage was done to crops, roads, bridges, clinics, schools and industrial plants. With the receding of the flood waters, we are bracing ourselves for the even greater problems of water-borne diseases and scarcity of food and safe drinking water, compounded by homelessness and unemployment. Under the direct supervision of Prime Minster Sheikh Hasina, we are reaching out to the affected people with assistance. The enormous scale of damage challenges us with a task of colossal magnitude. The cost of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction has been estimated at approximately $900 million.

The United Nations system, I am happy to say, has responded to our needs and requirements, as have our development partners and many friendly countries. On behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his support for and solidarity with Bangladesh at this hour of need. We are also thankful to the diplomatic missions stationed in Dhaka, the international organizations, non-governmental organizations and Bangladesh nationals abroad for their continued support, understanding and sympathy towards Bangladesh and its efforts to face the challenges. I reiterate here the appeal made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the generous and continuing support of the international community to Bangladesh in the coming days.

Floods are not unknown in Bangladesh. Flooding as we have been experiencing this year is unprecedented both in magnitude and duration. The Secretary-General in his annual report has referred to threats to human security, including natural disasters. Indeed, of all natural disasters floods cause the most widespread havoc and misery.

Bangladesh, of course, is not the only country to have suffered severe flooding this monsoon season. The cause of this year's floods may well be complex. We cannot help but be perturbed, however, by the observation in the Human Development Report of this year that global warming could permanently flood large areas and play havoc with harvests. The report cautions that the human consequences of global warming can be devastating for many poor countries like Bangladesh, which could see its land area shrunk by as much as 17 per cent with a one metre rise in sea level.

Elements and factors that affect the global ecosystem and the environment are interlinked. They transcend

national frontiers and can be addressed meaningfully only by nations acting in concert. It is a matter of survival for many peoples, and the highest priority should be given to this issue. We have come a long way since Rio, and yet, very few tangible benefits have been achieved in the absence of promised new and additional resources.

Since assuming office following elections in June 1996, our Government has been trying to put in place and strengthen institutions and laws that will reinforce democracy and promote good governance. In December last year, we negotiated an end to the long-standing problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Agreement was concluded within the framework of our Constitution, and it fully meets the legitimate concerns of the tribal population. We are now putting into place the necessary laws and institutional machinery pertaining to the Agreement and widening developmental activities in the area. My Government welcomes cooperation in this effort from all our development partners.

Our commitment to democracy and the rule of law has prompted us to accord priority to human rights. We are in the process of setting up an independent national human rights commission. Our objective is to take the human rights issue to the grass-roots level, to increase awareness among our people of their rights that have been guaranteed by our Constitution and to make the process of justice accessible and affordable to all. A lot remains to be done, and we have made a good beginning.

Bangladesh believes in the centrality of the right to development within the human rights regime. The implementation of the right to development will be further enhanced through a binding international treaty on this right. We are therefore very pleased that at the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, the heads of State and Government endorsed our Prime Minster's proposal that consideration be given to the preparation of a convention on the right to development.

At home we have also embarked on a comprehensive programme of reform and deregulation. Social development has remained the main focus of our development strategy. Education, health care, employment generation and women's empowerment within the broad framework of human development continue to receive priority attention. We are focusing on the rights of women and children. The role and involvement of civil society in our development efforts, particularly in the social sector, have been remarkable.

The process of globalization and liberalization brings risks, grave challenges and opportunities, but in unequal ways. The external economic shocks associated with this process are too powerful for the vulnerable economies to absorb. This is now being recognized even by the beneficiaries of globalization. As has been said, the globalization process must reflect a more inclusive vision of shared interests and shared values. We would support the views of the Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that a global economy should mean that no one will be left behind.

We need to ensure that the process of globalization and liberalization meets our development needs. We need to formulate a positive and workable agenda for ensuring that globalization promotes equity and benefit for all. An integral component of the globalization process is unfettered movement of the factors of production, including capital and labour. We need to encourage migration of labour in order to ensure balance in globalization.

Official development assistance in real terms has declined by more than 15 per cent from 1992 to 1996. This decline must be halted and reversed. For the poorest and more vulnerable economies, official development assistance remains indispensable. We call on all developed countries to reach the agreed target of 0.7 per cent for the developing countries and 0.15 to 0.2 per cent for the least developed countries as soon as possible, preferably by 2000.

The least developed countries represent the most vulnerable economies and peoples of the world. The ministerial communiqué issued after the 1998 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council underscored certain timely issues. In particular, I would mention the call for working together for enhanced market access for the least developed countries and to support their efforts at capacity-building. We also welcome the call for further progress towards zero tariff on exports from least developed countries.

Preferential treatment accorded to least developed countries should not be time-bound. The restrictive trade regimes of labour and environmental standards should be made flexible. We need to adequately prepare to address these and other relevant issues in the forthcoming Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2001.

The situation in the least developed countries in particular makes it clear that the eradication of poverty continues to be our overriding concern. It is essential to ensure long-term global security, as well as to achieve sustainable, economic and social development. We believe that the goal of the Microcredit Summit held last year, to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, will become a reality by the year 2005. Effective microcredit programmes provide access to small capital to people living in poverty in many countries of the world. In addition to the eradication of poverty, the microcredit programmes have also been contributing to the social and human development process, particularly the empowerment of women.

As the Secretary-General has noted in his annual report, the world has been free from large-scale regional conflict over the past year. Peace on a global scale and in a meaningful sense, however, still remains a distant goal. The post-cold-war reality underscores that we need to build a culture of peace based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and on respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance and wider and equal participation of people in all spheres of human activity. We welcome the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the proposed proclamation of the period 2001 to 2010 as the international decade for the culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world. The Secretary-General has been requested to submit a draft declaration and programme of action on the culture of peace to this session. We hope it will be possible for the General Assembly to adopt these documents at the earliest opportunity.

We are particularly concerned that hopes for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East are yet to be fulfilled. The framework for such a peace exists in the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principles of the Madrid Conference and the Oslo accords. The principle of land for peace has been accepted by all, and yet our Palestinian brethren continue to be frustrated in their hopes and aspirations. New settlements, expansion of the Jerusalem municipal area and large-scale internment of Palestinians without fair trial cannot promote the cause of peace. Bangladesh strongly believes that nothing should be allowed to thwart the peace process. We would urge that every moral pressure and persuasion be brought to bear upon the Israeli authorities so that the peace process can progress to its logical culmination. We look forward to the early establishment of an independent, sovereign State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital, and to its full membership of the United Nations.

The cause of the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in many African countries, particularly in the Great Lakes region, needs to be addressed more comprehensively. The recent plight of the people of Kosovo is a stark reminder of the not-so-distant events of Bosnia. Peace initiatives in Afghanistan have yet to make any headway. Peace in that country has to be built from within. The problem of Afghanistan can only be resolved by the Afghan people themselves, without outside interference. In such cases, we believe in the significant role that the United Nations can play as a peace-builder.

In the area of arms control and disarmament, some noteworthy progress has been made. The Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines will soon come into force. We welcome the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to set up committees on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States and also on fissile materials.

For Bangladesh, the pursuit of general and complete disarmament is a constitutional commitment, and we are ready to support any and every move that contributes to this objective. The nuclear tests in South Asia have been the subject of much debate, discussion and concern. In this connection, the initiative of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed to minimize tensions in the region through personal visits and by urging all concerned to contribute towards strengthening peace in South Asia and the world has been widely appreciated. We attach great importance and priority to our relations with our neighbouring countries. We are happy at the announcement of moratoriums on further nuclear testing, and we remain committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world. We believe that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to which Bangladesh is a party, provide useful frameworks for establishing a nuclear-weapons-free world. It was a pity to observe that consensus could not be reached in the Conference on Disarmament to set up an ad hoc committee for nuclear disarmament.

Last year, our Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly a package of reform proposals to make the United Nations more streamlined and attuned to present-day problems and realities. Some major decisions were, in fact, adopted by the fifty-second session on the basis of these proposals. This session of the Assembly, we believe, will continue the reform process, resolving in particular the issues relating to the development account, results-based budgeting and the so-called sunset clause.

Reforms have, by definition, to be a continual process. The United Nations has to be adapted to new conditions and problems. On this there can be no two opinions. For the past five years we have been discussing the issue of Security Council reform and expansion. We have articulated our particular concerns in different working groups and forums. At the recent Non-Aligned Movement summit in Durban, the Movement's collective position was reaffirmed. I would also stress that it is the weaker and more vulnerable group of countries that has the most vital stake in a dynamic and effective United Nations and its Security Council. These countries constitute a clear majority among the 185 Member States, and their concerns should not be overlooked or glossed over in any reform or restructuring exercise. While stalemate continues in this area, we are pleased that an International Criminal Court has seen the light of the day after so many years of efforts. Despite shortcomings, the Court is a milestone in United Nations history.

Bangladesh attaches great importance to the coordinated and integrated follow-up to the decisions taken at the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s, as an area which contributes effectively to the reform process. We believe that the outcomes of these conferences provide the international community with the most important opportunity to ensure a better life for the peoples of the world at the outset of the twenty-first century. In particular, we call for concerted efforts to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly next June for the follow-up to the Cairo population conference. We also welcome the proposed millennium Assembly session and hope that it will look into the issues that will challenge us in the coming decades. This Assembly session should be our outreach into the future.

The end of all political efforts, as a former United Nations Secretary-General once observed, must be the well-being of the individual in a life of safety and freedom. This is a goal to which no one is averse. It is also something that no nation can achieve on its own in a world that is increasingly interdependent. Peace and security and development in a real sense are indivisible.

Despite the increasing complexities it faces every day, the United Nations is functioning today more effectively and efficiently than before. In recent times it has played a far more constructive and positive role. The United Nations, of course, has its critics and, indeed, may even benefit from constructive criticism. There is always scope for change and improvement. The United Nations has had its share of failures, which so often seem much more glaring than its quiet successes. There can be no doubt that it remains the sole universal platform for humanity to chart its future in the new millennium.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Ferrero Costa.

Mr. Ferrero Costa (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Through you, Sir, I would like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election, which was so richly deserved because of his vast experience in international affairs and his well-known personal qualities. Uruguay, a friend to Peru, represents the authentic aspiration to peace and respect for international law that are standards of conduct for Latin America and for Peru.

I hereby reaffirm my country's unwavering adherence to the purposes, principles and standards enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which provide a guarantee of harmonious relations among States and of the full applicability of international law, as well as a foundation for the worldwide promotion of human rights, economic and social development and cooperation for development — all touchstones of international peace and security.

Only 10 years ago, the community of nations was moved by the dream of building a peaceful, democratic, equitable and multilateral new world order. Today, while we appreciate the continuing extension throughout the world of those positive tendencies, we note as well an accumulation of negative developments that threaten to initiate a period of uncertainty and change posing unprecedented challenges to our multilateral institutions and urgently demanding analyses and strategies to confront them.

The world financial crisis is affecting the very foundations of the international system. The provision of emergency financial relief may help individual countries, but it does not contribute to the health of the system as a whole, and it highlights the imperfections of the existing supervisory mechanisms. There is thus a need for a review of the Bretton Woods institutions and a revision of their policies so as to adapt them to current reality.

The growing imbalance among countries in the economic and social areas is another deeply troubling element. The 1998 *Human Development Report* indicates that 20 per cent of the inhabitants of high-income countries consume 86 per cent of the world's goods and services. In contrast, the poorest 20 per cent consume

less than 2 per cent. This reality underscores the urgent need to foster real sustainable human development throughout the world, as well as within our countries, which are confronting the challenge of relieving excruciating poverty.

Not only is it urgently necessary to strengthen multilateral institutions and achieve friendly cooperation, but it actually can be done. A few indications of current positive trends are the worldwide consolidation of democracy, the recognition of the central value of individuals and their inherent rights, the participation of civil society, the need to modify patterns of consumption and production for the advancement of sustainable development, the development and dissemination of technology and the significant though as yet insufficient progress in the fight against drug-trafficking and the struggle against poverty.

Understanding continues to grow among States regarding the concept of sustainable human development. For the past eight years, we Peruvians have been engaged in a process of national reconstruction and structural reform, the overriding aim of which is the eradication of poverty.

The Peruvian Government, under the leadership of President Alberto Fujimori, continues to implement a series of policies and programmes to improve the quality of life of all our citizens. The fundamental element of these efforts is the strategy for the fight against poverty. Our firm commitment to eradicating poverty is reflected in the national budget, which allocates more than 40 per cent to social spending. The national priority is the reduction of extreme poverty by 50 per cent — from 19 per cent to 10 per cent of the population — by the year 2000. Along the same lines, the Peruvian Government accords great importance to policies aimed at achieving gender equality and the full participation of women, population policies and policies for the protection of the most vulnerable: children, the elderly, the handicapped and internally displaced persons.

In the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Peru remains committed to giving substantive meaning to its content, incorporating its principles in legislation and putting them into practice through education and information and by including them in policies of development. The protection and fostering of human rights is a priority and a duty for Peruvians, which is why we defend the universality, indivisibility, comprehensiveness and non-discriminatory application of human rights.

My country has signed and ratified almost all the international instruments concerning human rights, both universal and regional. Consequently, we call upon those countries that still are not parties to the two International Covenants on human rights and to the American Convention on Human Rights to ratify them, not only in honour of the fiftieth anniversary but also so that they will be consistent with the principles they continually espouse in the international arena.

The persistence of new non-military global threats — such as international terrorism, the intensification of organized crime, corruption and the problem of drugs — adds to the gravity of the present international situation. Peru, which has suffered from terrorist violence, knows that this barbarism constitutes an assault on the individual and on society as a whole. It aims to destroy democracy and fundamental freedoms, in addition to threatening the peace and security of nations. In consequence, we consider all terrorist acts a systematic and deliberate violation of human rights that cannot be justified by any ideology or for any other reason, and that they should therefore be treated only as criminal acts.

Peru categorically condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and urges the international community to combat it vigorously. With the same determination, Peru reiterates that cases of international terrorism should be resolutely combated within the framework of international law.

In 1990 there were 120 thousand hectares of coca in Peru. Today, in a spectacular decline, this has been reduced by half, and with it the number of peasant families linked to the coca economy. Through programmes of alternative development it is possible to avoid a resurgence in the supply of coca leaves. We therefore need to combine national efforts with international support to overcome a complex problem that is a matter of shared responsibility. In this regard, we are promoting debt-swap programmes for alternative development projects. We have also convened a donor consulting group, which will meet next November, sponsored by the Inter-American Bank, the Inter-American Commission for the Control of Drug Abuse and the European Union.

As President Alberto Fujimori stated during the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the drug problem,

"The purpose of the meeting is to secure the complementary financial resources required to implement alternative development, prevention and rehabilitation programmes within the framework of anti-poverty policies and the sustainable management of natural resources." (*A/S-20/PV.2, p. 2*)

I strongly reaffirm that my country is committed to fighting drug-trafficking and its related effects until they are eradicated. The criminal structures of drug-trafficking cannot be given any respite during which they might reconstitute themselves. For this reason the international community must intensify its joint efforts to put an end to this scourge that affects humanity.

Because Peru has recently experienced a crisis situation, we face major difficulties resulting from internally displaced communities. Throughout the world there has been a dramatic increase in the number of the internally displaced in recent years, which makes it essential to strengthen United Nations action in this sphere. Consequently, we declare before the General Assembly the urgent need to further deepen and expand the mandates, programmes and sources of funding for the system's specialized agencies and bodies, with the aim of prioritizing assistance to those countries affected by this problem.

Peru is a peace-loving nation which works for peace and rejects conflict; which aspires to strengthen political and economic cooperation with all countries and groups of countries in different regions, on the basis of common interests and mutual benefit.

In the realm of peace and security, the international community must now unite against new tendencies towards nuclear proliferation and a growing number of internal conflicts and conflicts between States in various parts of the world. To this must be added conventional arms races and the hundreds of thousands of anti-personnel mines that are still deployed in the world, whose shocking and unjust consequences we all know. These facts together threaten to overwhelm the existing capacities of our countries and our international institutions.

Peru vigorously supports general and complete disarmament under strict international control. This is both a necessary condition for peace and an ongoing task of our Organization.

Deplorable recent developments in the sphere of nuclear proliferation underscore the urgency of perfecting the existing non-proliferation regimes and the imperative need for negotiations on nuclear disarmament to go forward. The proposed fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will have to consider these questions on a priority basis. We Latin Americans now appreciate all the more the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created in our region the first inhabited zone of the planet to be free of nuclear weapons, and we are continuing to develop ties of cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones.

My country was the first Latin American State to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and consequently rejects any kind of nuclear test anywhere in the world.

The Convention on anti-personnel landmines is a positive sign of change on the international scene. This makes plain the humanitarian concerns that inspire the conscience of the world. We are pleased that it will enter into force in March 1999, and are particularly interested in its full implementation after that date. Accordingly, the international community will have to give its active cooperation and make the utmost effort to remove or destroy the mines already planted in every region of the world.

Peru was one of the first countries to ratify the Ottawa Convention and it already begun to adopt its applicable provisions. We call upon all countries which have not yet done so to ratify or adhere to the Ottawa Convention as soon as possible, as a contribution to peace, security, human coexistence and the development of our peoples. We trust that those States which have already signed it but have not yet ratified it will comply with article 18 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, under which signatory nations must abstain from acts which would frustrate the purpose of the Ottawa Convention.

We believe that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin American and the Caribbean, which has its headquarters in Lima, can contribute to promoting a culture of peace and strengthening the efforts towards disarmament in the region, including dealing with the problem of mines.

In the foregoing scenario, the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system take on even greater importance. Change and adjustment lead to greater efficiency. The process of structural and functional reform of the United Nations, rendered imperative by globalization and changes on the international scene, makes it necessary to ensure the

coherence of its programmes and activities and to transform the Organization into an agent of sustainable human development.

We believe that it is appropriate and timely to continue our efforts to define the criteria that should guide reform of the Security Council. Decisions on this fundamental matter should necessarily be adopted on the basis of the broadest possible agreement and in the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations, which would itself be revised. The modifications we desire aim towards a more representative and efficient world Organization. In that regard, this effort must not give way to confrontation and discord. Let us rather support all efforts directed towards allowing the Organization to respond to the real needs of all its Member States.

Peru pays tribute to the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations on their fiftieth anniversary and honours the memory of the men and women, soldiers, police and civilians, including Peruvian nationals, who have sacrificed their lives in this noble mission. The peacekeeping operations, in some of which my country took part, are emblematic of the responsibility that the Charter assigns to our Organization.

We wish to reiterate, Mr. President, our best wishes to you and to the Assembly in this new period we are entering, which will surely have important implications for the international community.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.